

MY FOOTPRINTS ON THE SANDS OF TIME

Fr. P.T. Augustine, S.J.
(Fr. Augustine Peedikamala, S.J)

MY FOOTPRINTS

ON THE SANDS OF TIME

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St. Xavier's Senior Secondary School,

4, Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi - 110 054

Tel: 23957778

Email : stxaviersdelhi@gmail.com

: ptaugustine@hotmail/comptaugustine1@gmail.com

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Dedicated

*to the loving memory of my parents,
Mary and Thomas Peedikamala,
who not only gave me LIFE but also instilled in me
the fundamentals of the ART OF LIVING
- enthusiasm, tenacity and courage -
and inculcated in me the great noble values
of honesty and integrity, truthfulness and accountability,
generosity and compassion
and above all a deep concern for those who have fallen
on the wayside of the journey of life*



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**VERSES THAT HAVE INSPIRED ME
AND INFLUENCED MY LIFE**

**A PSALM OF LIFE
BY**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

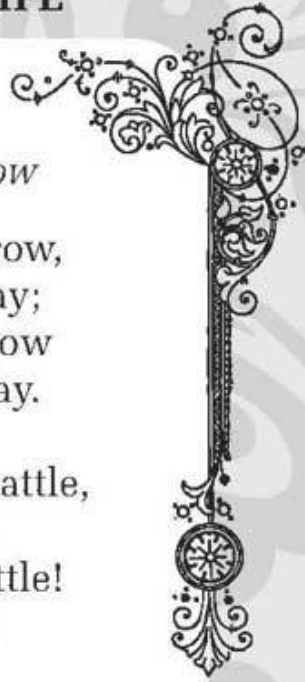
Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each tomorrow
Find us farther than to-day.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.



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PREFACE

“Write something worth reading, or do something worth writing,” said Benjamin Franklin. I'm confident that I have done both; but I leave it to others to assess my tall claim.

Years ago, when I was in college, my English professor used to tell me never to end the sentences in my essays with “etc., etc.” “Et cetera” is a Latin expression frequently used in English which means 'many other things'. But life is not a series of separate sentences. Life goes on with plenty of 'et ceteras'. For me in my practical life E.T.C. is interpreted as *Enthusiasm, Tenacity and Courage*. Let me explain each of these briefly.

Enthusiasm

Nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm, passion, zeal, zest and deep commitment. I love my work, my dreams, my goals, and I am passionately committed to it. Enthusiasm or passion is the inner urge for me to produce something new, to venture into the unknown, to accomplish even what seems to be impossible - dreaming the apparently the impossible dream. I have observed that some people go through life crossing one hurdle after another, accomplishing much and achieving their goals, while others struggle for a while, get nowhere and then give up. Enthusiastic persons seek and find opportunity

where there is apparently none, while the ordinary persons seek security and comfort in what is easily and readily available and justify and virtualize their love for the status quo.

Tenacity

Tenacity is persistence and perseverance with a definite focus. I know my dream, my goal; I know where I want to go and what I want to achieve. In spite of the inevitable obstacles and setbacks, I keep my focus on my goal. Tenacity is the willingness to hang on, to press on, in the face of every setback and adversity. Self-discipline is the quality that gives me the tenacity to move forward in the face of danger and uncertainty. This in turn develops within me the personal power to overcome any obstacle on my way. Tenacity is nothing but focused persistence and perseverance

Courage

It is risky to try out new ideas, to use creative and innovative methods and strategies to achieve our goals, to realize our dreams, because it involves change and change is threatening to most people. Ordinarily people are comfortable with their status quo. Many would defend the status quo, even much after the status has lost its quo! Non-changers and *status-quoists* are often rated as successful and often get society's approval. But it takes courage to turn one's back on the critics who are quick to find fault with anything new, any change, any innovative approach. It is indeed a sobering thought that those who make things happen make many mistakes; but they never make the biggest mistake of all – doing nothing.

In the following pages I have tried to record very briefly some of the significant *ETCs* of my life.

One of the greatest gifts I received from the Jesuit Society during the past four decades of service in the field of education of the youth was the assignments to various cities and positions in a variety of institutions. Exposure to different traditions, situations and cultures, the opportunity to associate with different groups of staff, parents and the public, and above all the chance to work for and touch the lives of youngsters of various age groups – all these have constantly stimulated my creativity and initiative and enthusiasm to work for the greater and better. It enabled me to see the realities of life from different perspectives. These transfers gave me an opportunity to interact with and learn from some of the best educators of the places and familiarize with some of the best practices of outstanding educational institutions. After having spent my life for the education of the youth in six educational institutions, I have the greatest satisfaction that I have touched and transformed the lives of thousands of students who are now pursuing their careers all across the globe. I am sure I have left my imprint on the hearts of a large number of them.



I

MY INSPIRATION: THE PSALM OF LIFE AND THE *IGNATIAN MAGIS*

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

~ Robert Frost

Over six decades ago when I was at a very impressionable age of twelve or thirteen my class teacher gave me a copy of poetry consisting of nine verses, which I was to memorize and recite at a poetry competition of the school where I studied. The title of the poem was “A Psalm of Life” and the author's name, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Little did the teacher or I myself realize that this poem

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would have a transformative impact on my entire life and a definite orientation to my life and an on-going impetus to my visions and dreams, and consequently the many phases and activities of my entire life. While all the verses of “A Psalm of Life” made a deep impression on me, the one that captivated my entire attention was the following verse:

*Lives of great men all remind us
that we can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us
footprints on the sands of time.*

It was as though it ignited a hidden element within my heart and imagination. The desire to make a definite contribution to the world and make a difference to the place and people around me grew slowly but steadily as I grew in age and wisdom. From this point of time almost all my choices, decisions and action plans were guided solely by this great vision and dream. This indeed is the story of the journey of my life.

I have travelled seventy five long years in pursuit of the realization of this much cherished dream. There were many struggles, hurdles, disappointments as well as successes and accomplishments, joys, happiness and satisfaction. Life is a strange mixture of tears and laughter, heavy clouds and sunshine. But as long as we have a definite goal and clear vision, setbacks are nothing but transitory, and they can be turned into stepping stones to something nobler and greater in life.

The message of *A Psalm of Life* in some way resembled the Ignatian and Jesuit motto of the *Magis*, striving for the greater and the better ceaselessly. The motto of the Society of Jesus, *For the Greater Glory of*

God, urges its members to relentlessly seek the greater glory of God in the service of other human beings. This indeed is making our lives sublime. Therefore during my training and formation in the Society of Jesus my initial inspiration of the Psalm of Life got deepened and strengthened. It also became more focused as the years went by. By personal choice and by destiny, I was to serve people and make my life lofty by involving myself in the field of education. Gradually I came to realize that the best means of the development of people is by imparting excellent education. Hence during the Jesuit formation, I got myself qualified for education at secondary and tertiary level.

Recognizing my competence in educational administration, my Jesuit Superiors appointed me successively to some of the most prominent secondary schools and colleges as Principal or Rector for the last four decades. They include St. Michael's School, Patna, St. Xavier's School, Jaipur, St. Xavier's School, Delhi, St. Joseph's School, Baramulla, Kashmir, St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu and St. Xavier's College of Education, Patna, which I founded in 1988 at the request of Patna Jesuit Society. Representing the Jesuit Community of St. Xavier's, Jaipur, I also had the privilege of establishing the St. Xavier's Parish, Jaipur and serve as its first Pastor. The parish soon became the largest and the most vibrant parish in the diocese of Ajmer, much to the joy and happiness of the Catholic community of Jaipur.

These assignments provided me with abundant opportunities not only to promote education but also to reach out to various categories of people and to serve them to the best of my abilities. I do have a great sense of satisfaction and fulfillment as I look back on my life and service

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to people. At the request of my colleagues and friends, I undertook the task to record my experiences in the above mentioned places and works. In my educational work and other services to people I have kept in mind certain values. First, be an example to others: I believe in the words of Albert Sheitzer who said: "Example is not the main thing to influence others, it is the only thing." Second, Excellence is a habit manifested in all the big and small things of everyday life. Aristotle says: "a habit is something that you repeatedly do". Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit." Finally, the following famous words enabled me to examine my life very frequently, if not daily:

Is anybody happier because you passed this way?

Does anyone remember that you spoke to him/her today?

When day is almost over, and its toiling time is through,

Is there anyone to utter now a kindly word of me to you?

Can you say tonight in parting, with the day that is slipping fast

That you helped a single brother/sister of the many you passed?

Is a single heart rejoicing over what you did or said?

Does a man whose hopes were fading, now with courage look ahead?

Did you waste this day or use it? Was it well or poorly spent?

Did you leave a trail of kindness or a scar of discontent?

As you close your eyes in slumber, do you think that God will say

"You have earned one more tomorrow by the work you did today?"

The following pages contain both a brief description and an analysis of my life and works, a stock taking of the past seventy five years. This exercise certainly is of great value for me personally. If it gives an

inspiration at least to some, that will be the reward of my efforts.

As the *Psalm of Life* says, these are:

Footprints, that perhaps another,

Sailing o'er life's solemn main,

A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,

seeing, shall take heart again.



II

SEVENTY FIVE YEARS AGO.....

*What you are is God's gift to you,
What you make of yourself is your gift to God.
~ Louis Nazar*

Born on 21st December, 1939, a couple of months after the outbreak of the World War II, I spent my early childhood when the world was reeling under the global economic recession. In our country too, the struggle for independence from the British rule had reached a fevering pitch. Though born into a middle class family that owned about 15 acres of agricultural land that would yield sufficient income in normal times, my family did suffer scarcity and deprivation precisely

because of the global as well as the local economic and political upheavals right up to the end of the World War II in 1945 and the Independence of India in 1947. From my early experiences in life, I learned that scarcity, deprivation and hardships do not break a man, but luxury and superfluous abundance certainly do.

I entered the local parish primary school in June 1945, not as the privileged son of an affluent father, but as an ordinary village boy sharing the lot of a struggling family of six boys, three girls and their parents. In terms of socio-economic status ours was a middle class family. However, we too had no choice but to be part of the global, and especially national, realities of the time – perhaps the worst time of the 20th century. Those historical circumstances trained me in setting definite goals for my life, in being persistent and persevering, hard working, in developing great visions and dreams, and in refocusing my mind on my goal and sharpening the focus as I move on, in being innovative and creative to find ways to overcome setbacks and hurdles that inevitably come in my way and so on and so forth. Gradually I learned the lesson that it is I and I alone, who is responsible for my life and my future career. Lessons learned in the midst of the hard realities of my early life are deeply ingrained in my psyche.

My state, Kerala, is the land of spices like pepper, ginger, cinnamon and areca nut. The Malabar Coast was a favoured destination for travelers from around the world. The first travellers were the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs and the Chinese followed. The latter day traders included the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British. Almost all of them have left their indelible imprint on this land in some form or the other – be it architecture, cuisine or literature.

Well protected by the Arabian Sea on the West and the Western Ghats on the East, Kerala was well insulated from the happenings in the rest of India to a great extent. Though a small state, on account of its natural protections, in Kerala there existed a number of small kingdoms. One royal family ruled over the small Vadakkumkur kingdom, covering some parts of central Kerala. The geographical extent of Vadakkumkur in the 18th century included the regions surrounding Ettumannor, Vaikom and some portions of Meenachil. For reasons unknown, the royal family shifted its base from Thodupuza to Kadanadu somewhere around A.D. 1600. My family was one among the seven families that accompanied the royal family to Kadanadu, now a nondescript town situated to the north of Pala in Kottayam district, central Kerala.

Kadanadu is a picturesque town abounding in lush vegetation, hills, natural loveliness and small rivers. The name *Kadanad* is a combination of two Malayalam words - 'Kadu' (referring to *forest*) and 'Nadu' (meaning *village*/place inhabited by people). The place is known for its scenic beauty. It is blessed with mist-covered mountains and valleys. Its peculiar and unique geographical position is suited for the cultivation of coffee, rubber, pepper and cardamom. Kadanad River is a major water source flowing through this town. It originates from the Melukavu Hills and joins the Ezhachery River. Then it flows in the form of Pala Meenachil River. The prime attractions of Kadanad are St Augustine's Church, Perumattom Sastha Temple and St. Sebastian's High School. Kadanad is en route to Thodupuzha and can be easily approached from Pala. By road, the town is connected with Ramapuram, Uzhavoor, Meenachil and Erattupetta. The nearest major railhead is Kottayam Railway Station. As of 2011 India census,

Kadanad had a population of 14692 with 7312 males and 7380 females. 3461 households live in this area.

I come from a very traditional family, one of the earliest settlers in Kadanadu. No written historical documents are available about the earliest history of our family but oral lore tells of times deeply rooted in casteism where my ancestor was assigned the work of lighting the temple lamp as well as forbidding the lower caste people from entering the temple premises. If unwittingly someone did so it was his duty to cleanse the temple and make it appropriate for pooja. Initially his house was very next to the temple, but later he shifted his residence to a small hill top not far away from the temple and hence got the family name 'Peedikamalayil'. ('the house on the hill top'). Today there are about 200 members in our family, who have settled not only in Kerala, but across India and even abroad.

Christianity is believed to have reached the shores of Kerala in 52 A.D. with the arrival of St. Thomas, one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. No other religion has influenced Kerala, God's own country, as much as Christianity. It is the third most practised religion in the state with more than 20% of the population being Christians. The most important influence of Christianity comes from the educational institutions run by the Catholic Church. Most of Kerala's schools are a part of the parish church. Hence religious education and scholastic education go side by side.

My school life was mostly uneventful. I was regularly rated as one of the best students although I was hardly one who devoted all my time to academics. Even if I had wished, I couldn't have done so due to my limitations. Along with schooling we had our share of work on the farm,

helping our parents. Our school time used to be from 10 in the morning till 4 in the evening. Hence before going to school as well as after coming from school we engaged ourselves in various domestic chores. The best part of my schooling was that unlike many of my other classmates I never had any detention in any class. As a result I was the smallest as well as the youngest in my class. Many of them were detained in different classes. This happened not because they were not intelligent enough to pass the school exams, but situations/circumstances demanded that they lend a helping hand to their parents on the farm; hence education was of least important concern in their life. The parents too were oblivious of the significance of providing quality education to their children. In fact two of my elder brothers, one of them two years senior to me and the other four years senior to me, studied with me in the same class during the last three years of my schooling!

I was a very quiet student in the class. As I was younger and smaller than almost all my classmates all through my school days, I could not involve myself substantially in much of the co-curricular activities. As such I didn't have any close friends at school. None of the seniors would take me into their group. Though young I was brighter than most of them in my class, and was rated academically one of the top three students. Even as a young boy I was endowed with lot of creative instincts. As a typical farmer's son I often tried my hand in producing something new. I used to experiment planting special varieties of mango trees, onion, tomatoes etc. I did many other innovative experiments in the practical life of my age and time. Looking back to those early years of life, I vividly remember that apart from this creative

and innovative spirit I was also passionate about style and class, elegance and excellence. I passed my high school, but as I had to help my father in many of the concerns of our large family I was not able to pursue my higher education. I had to stay at home, helping my father for two years.

Certain noble values of life are the greatest gifts that my parents bequeathed to me. They include a deep faith in the providential care of God, a sense of justice, a spirit of compassion and generosity, a deep desire to use my time usefully and productively, willingness to work hard and persistence and perseverance in achieving the targeted goals. These values which I imbibed from my parents enriched my life and my career wherever I have been down through the decades. In life there have been challenges and struggles, problems and obstacles, but none of them can alter God's design for me.

When I was twelve or thirteen years old, I happened to read a booklet on the Society of Jesus written by Fr. Joseph Puthenkulam S.J. I was immensely fascinated by the life history of its founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and his companion, St. Francis Xavier who became a missionary in India. As I read through the history of the Society and its many great members, I was also highly impressed by the rigorous formation of the Jesuits, their multiplicity of ministries and works, their spirit of adventure, their initiatives and zeal in the service of God and human beings. I was mesmerized by their intellectual pursuits, and more especially their educational work and institutions across the world. It was the beginning, an inspiration, the birth of a great dream that I should one day become a Jesuit, and make my own contribution to make a difference in the world. It was merely the initial stirrings which

grew as years passed by.

As a boy I had noticed that in our society the priests and nuns were held in high esteem and in our family too there were a few people who had devoted their life to pursue religious vocation. (Now there are 4 priests and 8 nuns in our family who are engaged in various evangelical works in different parts of the country). As a boy I knew that my vocation lay in becoming 'a fire that could kindle numerous other fires of love, inspiration, motivation and determination in developing the God given potential to the fullest and lead a life that is meaningful to me and helpful to others'.

The origin of my vocation to Jesuit religious life was like a small spring somewhere on the mountain side that develops as it flows down, meandering through the hills and valleys of the forest. It gathers strength and momentum, direction and focus as destiny would have it. Eventually it develops into a stream and then a river, and ultimately joining the great ocean of life, after serving innumerable living beings in its own imperceptible way. My vocation to the Jesuit Society also had its insignificant but powerful origins and it meandered through the hills and valleys of many uncertainties and hazardous times. Initially I toyed with the idea of joining an indigenous religious Congregation in Kerala called Carmelites of Mary Immaculate. (My father insisted that I should by all means remain in Kerala). But soon I gave up the idea for some reason or the other. Then he suggested that I become a diocesan priest. He even met the Bishop of Pala and made a formal request. Although deep down within my being there was the abiding desire to become a Jesuit Priest working in the northern missions, I gave my consent to my father.

Thus began in the Good Shepherd seminary, Pala, my religious formation for the service of the people as a diocesan priest. Initially I spent two years studying English, Latin and Hebrew. After two years I cleared my entrance examination for the study of Philosophy. During these two years the great dream of my school days of becoming a Jesuit Priest kept revisiting me with ever greater resonance. I also discovered that the life of a diocesan priest didn't really attract me. It was an extremely hard decision for me to leave the diocesan seminary and join the Society of Jesus which was reputed for long years of rigorous formation for religious life and priesthood. As I opted for Patna Mission of the Jesuits, I had also to leave Kerala and go to the distant and unknown areas of north India. When I intimated my decision to my Bishop, who had been my teacher and Headmaster during my school days, he was not at all pleased with it. But after a brief conversation, he told me: "Since you are aspiring to join a religious order in order to attain perfection, I shall not come in your way. God bless you!"

Convincing my parents and brothers and sisters about the appropriateness of my decision was even a greater task, as they had hoped to see me as a priest in about another seven years' time, and that too in Kerala. Jesuit formation for priesthood would take double the number of years. And it sadly happened my mother did not live to see my ordination to priesthood in the Society of Jesus in 1974, and my father was by then in the wheel chair after suffering a stroke. The only thing that kept him alive till then was his great hope to see me ordained a priest. He died five months after my Ordination. As in the case of everyone else, I had to take hard decisions and difficult choices.

When I applied for admission to the Society of Jesus, I was readily

accepted, but I was advised to do one year Pre-degree course in St. Thomas College, Pala, while being a part of the men in formation in the Mission Home. Finally, I made my first long train journey to Patna, along with nine others, on 24th June, 1961. I formally entered the Society of Jesus in Patna on 1st July, 1961. Then it was the beginning of long years of Jesuit formation. It was very significant because on that day my long cherished dream came true. In spite of the meandering paths of struggles and uncertainties, the Providence of God led me for a period of five long years of my youth. I learned the great lesson that every dream can be transformed into reality if we have the courage and determination, persistence and perseverance to pursue it.



Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives – choice, not chance, determines your destiny.

~ Aristotle

III

MY JESUIT FORMATION AND ACADEMIC PURSUITS:

*People forget how fast you did a job,
but they remember how well you did it.*

~ Howard Newton

The initial three years of my Jesuit formation, consisting of the novitiate and the Juniorate, were spent in Patna, the headquarters of the Patna Mission which is spread over a great part of the territory of Bihar. Since 1921 it had been entrusted to the Jesuits of Chicago and Detroit Provinces of the United States. Since then the Jesuits had been engaged in social and educational work as well as evangelization work in those rural areas. My formation during those three years was under

the direction of the American Jesuits.

Besides the training in spirituality and studies of the Constitution and the documents of the Society of Jesus, our curriculum included the study of English literature, History, Latin and Hindi. After I successfully completed this three-year program, I was sent to the Sacred Heart College, Shembanur nestled in the heart of the Kodaikanal mountain ranges in South India, for another three-years of Philosophy, Psychology and Physics. These initial six years as a Jesuit were very formative and highly motivating as far as my future endeavours were concerned. After my Shembanur days I was assigned to Ara Cathlic High School in Bihar in 1967 for a year of teaching, where I had the first exposure to teaching and administrative work.

The Jesuit educational work at the school and University level all over the world greatly fascinated me and I thought I should prepare myself for this particular service of the Jesuit Society. However, in 1968 when I was 28 years old, I found myself without even a Bachelor's degree, even though I had devoted eight years for studies in religious as well as secular subjects. I was not inclined to spend another three years for a bachelor's degree from a University. After much inquiry I came to know that the Jesuit studies, including Philosophy were recognized as equivalent to a Bachelor's degree not only in most of the Western universities, but even by a couple of Indian Universities. I got a creative new idea that I should make an effort to get our Jesuit studies recognized by Patna University as equivalent to B.A. Honours degree. It was an adventurous dream; but if succeeded, it would be beneficial not only for me but for the other Jesuits as well. On my request, the Patna Provincial, Fr. Zach Varikamakil, S.J., though skeptical about my new

adventure, gave me the permission to make an attempt rather reluctantly, cautioning me that perhaps nothing might come out of my efforts. Many of my Jesuit friends were not at all optimistic about the plan and some even laughed at 'the impossible dream'. They said that I would be wasting my time, as no positive response would come out of the Patna University.

All the worthwhile things in the world had once been declared impossible until someone took the courage to make them happen. I took a personal decision to plunge into the effort, come what may. Through the good offices of Fr. Gordon Murphy S.J., Principal of St. Xavier's, Patna, I got an appointment with the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar of Patna University. When I met them individually, they gave me a patient hearing, and promised to look into the matter. I also presented to them a well drafted letter, making a formal request to recognize the Literature-Science-Philosophy course of the Society of Jesus as equivalent to B.A. Honours of Patna University. I continued to work further and collected the syllabi of the courses I had done in Patna as well as in the Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur. I also managed to get letters from Oxford and Cambridge Universities in England and Dharwar University in South India, stating that they recognized our studies as equivalent to B.A. in their respective institutions. These and other additional data and arguments I presented to the Patna University. I also met the members of the Academic Council and some members of the Senate of the University and presented to them my case with written data to substantiate and justify my claim.

For five months almost every day I made the twelve kilometers cycle ride from the Jesuit house to the University, waited for hours at the door

of the officials concerned, and often returned home with a heart heavy with disappointment. But I persisted in my efforts, even though I faced many obstacles and very discouraging remarks and responses. The eagle, the dove and many other fast flying birds that are strong on the wing can fly more swiftly against a strong wind than a gentle breeze. This is because they are stimulated by the muscular strength of their wings. Similar indeed was my case. As I faced great delay, disappointments, obstacles and ridicule, I became more determined and found creative new ways to approach the issue. I knew that there is no heavy cloud that the sun cannot break through. At long last, there was a flicker of bright light. My dream was going to be realized. On 10th November, 1968, I got a letter from the Patna University, informing me of its decision. It stated that the Patna University recognized the Literature- Science- Philosophy course of the Society of Jesus as equivalent to B.A. Honours. It also stated that I was eligible for admission to a Post Graduate course in Patna University. Back in the Jesuit House, I could not celebrate the realization of my dream, this historic achievement. For on that day I received the saddest news of life from home – my beloved mother, who had been ill for some time, passed into eternity on that day at the age of sixty. I surrendered myself to the inscrutable designs of Providence.

At the University it was time for application for admission to Post Graduate courses, I sent my application for admission to the Department of Political Science, along with the recognition letter from the University. I was duly admitted for Post Graduate studies. On completion of the two-years in the University examination I secured a First Class, standing 1st in Patna University. It is also very significant that the recognition I obtained from the University benefited many

other Jesuits who could do Post Graduate studies in Patna University on the basis of their Literature-Science-Philosophy course of the Society of Jesus.

In 1971 I was sent to De Nobili College, Pune for my studies in Theology. The following year St. Mary's College of Theology was shifted from Kurseong to Delhi, and re-named as Vidya Jyoti College of Theology. I, then found a new opportunity in Delhi. I asked permission from the appropriate authorities to continue my Theological studies in Delhi's Vidya Jyoti College. The advantage would be that I could work for an M. Phil. degree in Political Science in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, while at the same time pursuing my Theological studies. After much persuasion I got permission for this from the Academic Council of Vidya Jyoti. I got admission to the School of International Studies which was by then part of the JNU. I also appeared in an All-India Competitive Examination for a UGC scholarship for the period of my research work. I obtained a very good scholarship for a period of five years, in case I decided to do Ph.D. I obtained my M.Phil. Degree in American Studies from JNU in January 1974. The M.A. and M.Phil degrees I possessed were then sufficient to be a professor or even a Principal of a college. For various reasons, I decided not to pursue Ph. D. studies at least at that time, even though my guide encouraged me to do so.

When I completed my Theological studies in 1975, my first assignment was to teach Political Science in St. Xavier's College, Ranchi up to the level of B.A (Hons). After a year, I was told by the Provincial that my services would be required for administration in the Senior Secondary schools of the Patna Province. I worked in St. Michael's School, Patna as

the Acting Principal for a year, and then I was sent to Xavier University, Cincinnati, U.S.A. for an M.Ed. degree. I successfully completed my studies in a year's time, obtained the highest grades in all the courses that I took, and returned to India in 1978. Before returning to India, I set my eyes on some further studies in Harvard University. I applied to the university for admission and a scholarship. I appeared for tests for both and I was successful in obtaining both. However, I was asked by my religious superiors to return to India and resume my works as soon as my studies in Xavier University was completed. Thus my Harvard ambition could not be realized. Life is what happens when you plan something else!

Much later, in 1993 when I got a sabbatical for a year, I went to Loyola University, Chicago, from where I obtained an M.A. degree in Human Resources Management.



*Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we
can catch excellence.*

~ Vince Lombardi

IV

ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOL: PATNA

*The quality of a persons life is in direct proportion to their
commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavour.*
~ Vince Lombardi

Towards the end of 1976, during the 118th year of its inception, I was appointed Acting-Principal of St. Michael's School, Kurji, Patna. Today 156 years old, St. Michael's is the great grandfather of all schools in Patna, rising majestically in the firmament of quality education. It stands sky high taking pride in its impressive achievements in the field of education. During the latter part of the 19th century when

education around the world focused just on the three R's, St. Michael's decided to devote its time and energy to the all round development of the personality of its students. The pioneers wanted to educate children to face life with courage and determination and not just fill their mind with information and knowledge.

The story of its inception is very humble and undistinguished. The school is situated at Kurji, a nondescript village on the outskirts of Patna city, on the banks of the river Ganges between Patna Junction and Dinapure, in Bihar. In those days, the village used to be very insignificant, occupied by ordinary Indian farmers, far away from the din of Patna city. Though modern day Kurji looks entirely different due to ever expanding concrete jungles that threaten to snatch away its glorious past, its holy past from its vantage point on the river, cannot be ignored.

It was here about 160 years ago a holy catholic Bishop Dr. Heartmann, who at that time was the Vicar Apostolic of Patna, lived, laboured and died, after having sown the seeds of a modern educational institution named St. Michael's School, Kurji. None at that time could ever imagine that this tiny seed would one day blossom into such a large tree, nestling hundreds, thousands, perhaps lakhs of fledglings who at a later stage took to wings and settled at different corners of the globe, playing a pivotal role in shaping the world as we know it today.

The school property was originally purchased by Rt. Rev. Mgr. Zuber O.M.C. of Patna City in November 1855 with the intention of establishing a Christian community in the locality. But the Revolt of 1857 upset all the original plans. After the upheaval, the clergy and the religious of Patna Vicariate were burdened with the responsibility of

looking after a good number of orphaned children whose parents couldn't be traced. The Sisters at Bankipur decided to take care of the girls and Mgr. Zuber was entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the boys which he gladly accepted. He then decided to use the property, consisting of seven bighas of land with a small bungalow, which he had purchased in Kurji for this purpose. The bungalow was renovated to become a boarding school cum residence for teachers.

Thus it was in 1858 that St. Michael's High School, Kurji, Patna, took its origin. In January 1860 Bishop Hartmann was appointed the Vicar Apostolic of Patna. He arrived in June and set himself the task of building a school for the orphaned children. In the meantime Mgr. Zuber purchased another five bighas of adjacent land which then could be used as part of the upcoming school premises. With 12 bighas (about seven acres) of land, Bishop Hartmann, initiated the process of constructing the buildings required for the school. With no aid from the government and only God's providential care, he laid the foundation stone in 1860. The building was soon completed but seemed rather small and inadequate for the use as a boarding-school. There were several criticisms but the Bishop was not disheartened. His prophetic words were: "This is but a mustard-seed that will one day grow into a mighty tree".

As the seed began to blossom, the Bishop guided its initial steps along the paths of virtue and learning. He cultivated a family spirit among the boys and their education proceeded in an atmosphere of sympathetic understanding. The Spirit infused into the infant school by the saintly Bishop prevails in all its vigour even today, after 156 long years.

Erecting a school building is a matter of money and means but

providing good education needs a good body of experienced and sensitive teachers who can mould the rising generations on the expected lines of character and knowledge. Dr. Hartmann was not one to let the grass grow under his feet. He toured Europe in the quest of such teachers but returned without much success. He requested the Superior General of the Irish Christian Brothers to send some men for help. But he got only some vague promises from the Superior General.

In 1864 two Brothers, Bro. Stephen Cuddy and Bro. Patrick Malone came to help out in Kurji. But this arrangement did not last long. In the following year Bro. Patrick passed away due to enteric fever and Bro. Stephen returned to Calcutta. Finally the Bishop had to fall back on the resources available at the local level. The school grew and developed and regular teachers were appointed. By Christmas 1863 Bishop Hartmann fell sick. Though the prayers of the people brought some comfort for him, his condition worsened by 1866. Despite the best medical attention that could be procured, the saintly Bishop left for his eternal abode on 24th April, 1866. The pupils of St. Michael's were once again orphaned, having lost their Father, friend and founder of the school. Following his death, the Capuchin fathers continued the work of the school with zeal and enthusiasm.

The Irish Christian Brothers in St. Michael's School, Patna

The Capuchin Fathers, however, every now and then earnestly reminded the Christian Brothers to come and help them with the School so that they could be freed for the work of social and pastoral ministry. But the Congregation was not able to release Brothers working elsewhere and come to Kurji. Finally in 1894 four Brothers arrived in Kurji. On 1st November, 1894 on All-Saints Day, Rt. Rev. Dr. Pesci,

Bishop of Allahabad, handed over the Kurji institution, with his blessings, to the Irish Christian Brothers – the Religious Body so well trained and reputed all over the world for the education of youth.

Up to that time St. Michael's had the status of a Middle School, but owing to the various improvements made and successes at examinations it could easily become a High School in future. The staff had been improved. With regard to the public examinations the results had been impressive, particularly the entrance examinations to the Medical College, Calcutta. The grooming of the boys had been very exemplary. A school that could acquire such a reputation and earn such unstinted praise from all classes of citizens, must have been exceptionally well managed and worthy of all the honours accorded to it. Rev. Fr. Fulgentius, O.C. in his biography of Dr. Hartmann, referred to the school at Kurji as having a glorious past and a promising future. He wrote: "Kurji is now a flourishing centre of education, and the present St. Michael's School stands as a living monument to the memory of our holy Bishop".

The dedication of the Brothers took the school to new heights and the school excelled in education, sports and games and was widely renowned. For a long time, it remained a boarding school, taking in very few day scholars, but gradually this latter group increased. The school buildings survived the earth quake of 1897, though the buildings got a most violent shaking. By 1898 the school was doing exceptionally well. During the II World War there was the danger of the school being closed down to provide accommodation for the military, but the Brothers were able to conduct the classes as usual.

In October 1958 St. Michael's celebrated its Centenary anniversary.

Prayers of thanksgiving, feasts and sports were a regular feature of the celebrations. For over a century St. Michael's did yeoman work in the field of education. The school trained young men who took up high positions in the armed forces, the government services and in the fields of medicine and business.

The Jesuits and St. Michael's School, Patna

The Jesuit Fathers have been the Chaplains to the Brothers and the boys of St. Michael's since 1920. By 1968 the Brothers found it necessary to open negotiations with the Jesuits for the takeover of the school due to lack of personnel to manage it. The transfer took place on 12th December, 1968 and the Irish Brothers bid goodbye to St. Michael's and Patna.

Fr. Gordon Murphy took over the mantle as the new Jesuit Principal. He was the Principal until 1972 when he passed away after suffering a massive heart attack. He was succeeded by Fr. John De Mello as the interim principal and in 1973 Fr. Norman Harland came along to give dynamic impetus to the school for the next 8 years. He was succeeded by Fr. Thomas Karthanam, S.J. who led the school through more changes and growth.

Leaving My Footprints

As an architect of change I too left my indelible imprint on the history of the great School, St. Michael's. During the long formative years as a Jesuit I learned certain valuable lessons for life. Among them, first: we are what we are because of what we do with our opportunities, and opportunities come disguised as hard work. Ordinary people wait for opportunities, but great people create opportunities for themselves and for others. Second, my life and my dreams are to be focused, and they are to be constantly re-focused as I progress with the experiences of life. Third, I can swim against the current, if only I am strong as I often will need to be. There are plenty of dead fish that float with the current.

Towards the end of 1976, I was first appointed to St. Michael's as the Acting Principal, with the special charge of the Plus Two Section. In those days the newly established Senior Secondary Section, both at St. Michael's and at Notre Dame Academy, faced many serious problems for survival and development. Both institutions worked in close collaboration with each other, sharing personnel and other resources. In a few years, the Plus Two at St. Michael's was established on solid foundations.

Though I took over as the Acting Principal in April 1977, my first assignment was only for a short period of time. In September that year I was sent to Xavier University, Cincinnati, U.S.A., where I did M.Ed. in Secondary School Administration. On my return from the United States I was assigned Rector of St. Xavier's School, Jaipur.

In 1984 when I got an opportunity to return to St. Michael's as Principal, I had my visions and dreams for further development of the School. During the next eight years, I had the opportunity as well as the whole

hearted support and cooperation of the staff, students and their parents to translate those visions and dreams into reality. I was assisted by three competent and dedicated Vice Principals: Mr. J. Thomas, Mr. P.S. Raj and late Mr. A. Fernandez. In the brochure which the Staff and students published on the occasion of the warm farewell they accorded to me, they highlighted and listed about eighty five significant changes and developments during my eight-year tenure. These pertain to five major areas of the educational enterprise of the school: academic growth, co-curricular activities of the students, development of modern and additional infrastructural facilities, professional training of the staff, and implementation of the policy decisions of the Jesuit Society. I shall not go into the details of these, except highlight a few.

Change of Affiliation from the ICSE to the CBSE:

After I took over as Principal of the School, in my first meeting with the Governing Board, I was told that my first major task would be to shift the affiliation of the School from Indian School Certificate Examination (ICSE) to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The Patna Province of the Society of Jesus had adopted a new education policy, according to which all its schools were expected to adopt a dual medium of instruction – Hindi and English. Since ICSE stipulated that all its affiliated schools must be fully English medium, the change was unavoidable. It was also argued that academically the CBSE syllabus was better adapted to the admission procedures of professional institutions in the country. This major shift, however, involved overcoming several hurdles and problems involving all stake holders – the students and their parents, the teachers, the education department of Bihar, and the two affiliating bodies concerned – ICSE and the CBSE.

The teachers had also to be trained and prepared for the new pattern. The shift also had to be gradual spanning upto a period of at least two years in order to avoid any serious disadvantage to the student body. All this was done efficiently, judiciously and tactfully and finally with effect from 1986, the School changed its affiliation from the I.C.S.E to the C.B.S.E. The Senior Secondary section got so well established by 1986 that there was a great rush for admission to the Plus Two.

Introduction of Co-education:

With a view to facilitate the creation of a more integrated and egalitarian society where gender equality is respected and celebrated, the School, for the first time in its 132 year-old history, introduced co-education in 1990. The co-educational pattern would also provide the children for an emotionally and psychologically integrated growth right from initial stages of the formal educational system. For the parents too it facilitated education of their girl child also in the same school. The School also wanted to give due emphasis to the education of the girl child.

Establishment of Staff Cooperative Society:

For the welfare of all categories of employees of the School, I initiated St. Michael's Staff Co-operative Society in 1987, with its own objectives, rules and regulations drafted and approved by the staff. In order to give an initial impetus to the new scheme, the school made an initial, one-time contribution. The entire staff whole-heartedly welcomed the scheme. Even now, twenty seven years after its foundation, this Staff co-operative Society functions smoothly and efficiently for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The Staff Development Programs:

For the professional and personal growth of our teachers I personally conducted and organized several staff development programs, training in computer education, and programs for exposure to various teaching patterns and educational practices. Training in Jesuit educational pedagogy was a regular practice, especially the characteristics of Jesuit education. The most appreciated staff development program was the 'Adventures in Attitudes' which St. Michael's teachers of those days still fondly remember, as they benefitted immensely from it.

The founding of the Patna Catholic School Principals' Conference:

In the 1980s there were about twenty Catholic schools, serving the cause of education in Patna, the capital city of Bihar. They shared the same common objectives and faced more or less similar problems and challenges. Schools often faced various types of crises. I took the initiative to bring together the Principals of all the Catholic schools of Patna on a common platform so that there would be support and help readily available whenever any school faced any problem. Thus I initiated the All-Patna Catholic School Principals Conference in 1988, with regular meetings on a quarterly basis in order to discuss educational matters. This conference is still active even today.

The Founding Fathers envisioned St. Michael's to become a great educational centre. To an extent this dream was realized when the School became Senior Secondary and the Michaelites year after year secured top ranks in all-India competitive examinations. The student enrolment crossed the 2000 mark in 1988, and when the young ladies started graduating from the School, they gave competition and complementarities to the young men of their own class.

Inter-Personal Relationship, Formation and Information:

Among the intangible, yet palpable, fruits of my work in St. Michael's was the fostering of an atmosphere of cordiality, cooperation and mutual support as well as the spirit of responsible freedom experienced by the staff and students. I ensured that the School gave the students an education which supported insight formation and not merely information gathering. With the students and the staff I emphasized on the importance of creativity and an innovative spirit, enhanced their ability to face risks and challenges and the capacity to dream big dreams and gave them the courage to translate those dreams into reality as well as a passion for excellence in all that they did. I strengthened their commitment and tenacity as well as their goals and the ambition to grab all possible opportunities for development and creating new opportunities for themselves and for others. I am sure my deeds spoke louder than my words. "Example is not the most effective way to influence people. It is the only way", says Albert Schweitzer.

All Jesuits are agents of change and change is an essential part of every Jesuit's life. He has to move from one place to another, from one responsibility to another so that he won't get stagnated in life. By 1990, I had the feeling that I had done my bit of work for St. Michael's and began looking for new areas of work. Delhi region was already established by that time. Since I had opted to work for Delhi I requested my Provincial to grant me permission to move on to Delhi Jesuit Region. But he asked me to stay on for some more time, and I stayed on for two years more, bringing about more changes and developments.

Finally my chance for this change came in 1992. I attended several heartwarming and grand farewell programs in which the staff and

students and their parents appreciated my contribution to the making of St. Michael's. Finally the day came when I had to depart from Patna. As I reached the railway station to catch the train to Delhi, I was surprised to see a large number of students, parents and teachers gathered on the platform to see me off. It was indeed an overwhelming moment to see a huge gathering, beyond my expectations. They had brought bouquets and gifts for me and everyone came and met me and talked to me. I was indeed moved by their love and affection for me. This voluntary gathering was indeed the spontaneous outpouring of the great appreciation for whatever I did for St. Michael's School, as well as the school education in Patna. It was a pleasant surprise that many of those students who had gathered there were the ones who had received penal action from me for better disciplining. The train was late to reach the station and the students surrounded me shouting slogans in praise of me, talking to me and enjoying every bit of the last moments I was with them. As the train arrived they all bade me a final goodbye and I boarded my compartment. It was loaded with so many packets of gifts and bouquets that the co-passengers were surprised and wondered who this VVIP was! Though the train moved out of the platform, a little ahead it stopped again. I could see all those students running after the train, crossing the platforms and once again coming to touch my feet. I left Patna, my heart filled with joy and great contentment for what I had accomplished at St. Michael's.

During the farewell speeches the St. Michael's staff and students had accorded me with the qualifications like: "a builder of people, an architect of changes and a visionary leader etc." I know that these complements came from the genuineness of their hearts, and I am

grateful to them. I am equally grateful to the Parent-Teacher's Association and its Executive Committee as well as the Management Committee for their unstinted support and cooperation.

As I wind up these words of recollections and reminiscences of my St. Michael School days, I pay tribute to all those who were and still are associated with St. Michael's: the Capuchin missionaries who were the founding Fathers, the Christian Brothers who nurtured this institution for over seven decades, the Patna Jesuit Society under whose management this institution has been developing for the past four decades, my predecessors and successors in the office of the Principal, the dedicated teachers and other staff members who spent their lives for the formation of the youth, and above all, the many generations of students who, after their education in St. Michael's, contributed immensely to the building up of our great nation.



Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected.

~ Steve Jobs

V

ST. XAVIER'S COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, PATNA

*Some men see things as they are, and ask "why?"
I see things as they never were, and ask "why not?"
~ George Bernard Shaw*

My memoirs of St. Michael's will remain incomplete without referring to another significant milestone, the establishment of a college of education, called St. Xavier's College of Education, on St. Michael's campus in 1988.

3rd October 1988 was an exceptionally humid and sultry Sunday, and the weather would surprisingly change for better on the following day.

It was perhaps symbolic of the small but truly significant event that took place in Kurji, Patna. The opening of St. Xavier's College of Education was to change the future of education in Bihar by empowering hundreds of young men and women dedicated to the cause of providing quality education to the future citizens of the country.

The inaugural function on 3rd October, 1988 started with a solemn Eucharistic Celebration in St. Michael's School hall, presided over by Rt. Rev. Benedict J. Osta, S.J., the then Bishop of Patna, and assisted by Fr. John D'Mello, S.J. and 37 other priests. The Mass and the inaugural function that followed were well attended by the hundred newly admitted students of the first batch of the College, its faculty members, friends and well-wishers. At the end of the Mass and before the formal inaugural function I requested the Bishop and Fr. Provincial to put their signatures in the first Register of the College, symbolizing a new and fully authenticated beginning. After they signed the Register, I garlanded both of them. In a deeply touching gesture both of them put the garlands back on me, saying: "It is you who should be felicitated". Welcoming the new higher educational institution, the students of St. Michael's School presented an excellent cultural program of music and dance. There was jubilation all around.

In my speech at the inaugural function, I pointed out that Bishop Hartman, the founder of St. Michael's School had envisioned that the campus should one day become an educational hub. I ended up my speech with a message to the first batch as well as the future generations of the students of the College quoting the illustrious English poet, William Butler Yeats: "I have spread my dreams under your feet. Tread

softly, for you tread on my dreams”.

Today after twenty six years of its establishment this college has given and continues to give excellent professional training to over 2600 aspiring teachers of Bihar and other places. I am proud to say that St. Xavier's College of Education, which I had been privileged to found while I was Principal of St. Michael's, was and is still one of the fruits of my labour of love, a dream fulfilled and a vision realized. On that day Archbishop Benedict J. Osta, S.J. of Patna, said: “This College of Education is the best contribution that the Society of Jesus is making for the cause of quality education in Bihar”. The same sentiments were expressed by the present Archbishop of Patna, Archbishop William D'souza, S.J., at the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the College on 1st December 2013.

My dream of a college of education had begun to take concrete shape when on 14th March, 1988, at a meeting of Jesuit educators at Xavier Teachers' Training Institute, when it was proposed that the Jesuits of Patna should take steps to establish a college of education in order to promote quality education in schools by well-qualified and competent teachers. The idea was perhaps nothing new. Fr. Provincial pointed out that over a couple of decades several committees were appointed to make a feasibility study of such a desirable venture, but all reported only hurdles, problems and difficulties, and not possibilities. He also added that if anybody present was willing to make an attempt, he would extend all his support and help, including the Sanjeevan Niwas Building, to establish a college of education. In the silence that followed, I volunteered to make an attempt on two simple conditions: first, I should get the mandate in writing from the Provincial; second, no

committee should be appointed. Proverbially, a committee is a group of persons who individually can do nothing, and collectively can decide that nothing can be done! This had also been the past history of attempts to establish a College of Education.

Thus began the unfolding of the realization of my dream. I was well aware of the hurdles that lay ahead. But I also knew that most of the things worth doing in this world had been declared impossible before they were actually accomplished by men who had visions and dreams, passion and zeal, dedication and commitment, persistence and perseverance. Paulo Coelho, the author of the international bestseller 'Alchemist' says in his book that 'if you have a great dream and passionately pursue that dream, the whole universe will conspire to enable you to realize that dream'. To a large extent it is true.

All along I got the support and assistance from many competent people. Foremost among them was Sr. Liceria A.C., Principal of Patna Women's College, who considered the new venture as her own and tirelessly worked with me till our goal was achieved. Getting the necessary approval from the Education Department, without paying any bribe, was indeed a Herculean task. Getting affiliation to Magadh University was another difficult step before us. Sr. Liceria and I pooled in our only resources - institutional and personal influence, good public relations and above all a great passion for achieving what is considered to be impossible. We realized our goals in a record period of five months.

In one of my innumerable visits to the Secretariat seeking the necessary approval, while sitting in the office of Mr. Bagamber Prasad, the Joint Secretary for higher education, I was asked to enter the name of the new college in some official record. I had not discussed the issue of naming

the College with anybody. But instantaneously I wrote the name as St. Xavier's College of Education and it was entered in the official record for once and for all.

Once we obtained the necessary approval from the government and affiliation to the university, we lost no time in making the necessary publicity to recruit the staff, invite applications from students seeking admission, setting basic norms, rules and regulations for the new college. Thus the College was inaugurated within six months after I received the mandate from Fr. Provincial. He and many of my fellow Jesuits, many religious in Patna and the teachers of St. Michael's School constantly supported me. I am grateful to all of them.

St. Xavier's College of Education, started functioning, with a splendid orientation lecture delivered by Sr. Jyoti SND on 4th October, 1988. Sr. Doris D'souza, the then Lecturer and later Principal of Patna Women's College, took exceptional interest in the development of the new college and took classes there after her regular classes in her own college.

Teachers from St. Michael's School who extended their generous help include Mr. P.S. Raj, Mr. J. Thomas, Mr. R.N.R. Mazumdar, Mrs. Paramjit Narang, Mrs. Preeti Sinha, and Mrs Roselyn. For two years classes were held in St. Michael's School building from 2.00 to 5.30 p.m. This also meant that I had to be in the Principal's office from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m., as I held the dual charge of the Principal of St. Michael's School and St. Xavier's College of Education. Perhaps that was better for the new institution in order to successfully face the many teething troubles that are an inevitable part of any new venture.

Although Sanjeevan Niwas had earlier been designated as the location

for the B. Ed. College and it was shown to the Inspection Team of the University much earlier, the plan had to be changed. It was decided that a new building could be built on St. Michael's campus, according to the requirements of the B.Ed. College, keeping in mind the possible future expansion and development of the new institution. I left no time in identifying the location, getting an architect to draw up the plans, getting the plans approved by the Patna Regional Development Authority and getting a competent contractor to accomplish the work satisfactorily and at the earliest. So, the blessing of the foundation stone for the new college building took place on 31st March, 1989. As we had also started construction of another block for the school building, the burden of work kept increasing. So I requested for the help of Fr. Zach Varikamakil, an experienced builder, to supervise the construction work. The construction of the school and college buildings was completed and the blessing of the two buildings was performed by Bishop Benedict Osta, S.J, in the presence of a large gathering, including the College and School students on 3rd July, 1990. Another great task was completed in a record period of time. Shortly after, the College of Education was moved into the new building.

I realized that the College required, especially at its infancy stage, the guidance of a competent, full-time Principal. I made a request to Fr. Thomas Karthanam, S.J. former Principal of St. Michael's School, and then a Lecturer in Loyola College of Education, Jamshedpur, to come and shoulder the responsibility of the new college of Education in Patna. It was during his long and successful tenure of almost two decades as Principal that St. Xavier's College of Education, Patna, developed and gained a reputation for excellence in teacher education.

He also initiated Master's degree program in the College and built new buildings for the College.

St. Xavier's College of Education is the fruit of the labours of many, many people- Jesuits, other religious and lay people- who enthusiastically collaborated with me, especially at its initial stages. Above all, I am grateful to God Almighty for His showers of blessings on all those who have been associated with the College during the past 26 years during which time the College produced about 2600 well-qualified, competent, dedicated and committed teachers to further the cause of quality education in our country.

The famous British satirist of the 19th century, Sir Josiah Stamp, once commented: "Education is the inculcation of the incomprehensible into the ignorant by the incompetent." St. Xavier's College of Education, Patna has made a humble attempt during the past quarter of a century to convert those 'incompetent' into really competent professionals to meet the challenges in the field of education in our country in this 21st century, in a globalised, technology driven world.

What we are is God's gift to us; and what we become through His guidance is our gift to God. St. Xavier's College of Education, Patna, with its accomplishments and national reputation for excellence in teacher education is our gift to God.



Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.

~ Aristotle

VI

MESSAGES OF APPRECIATION

*Example is not the main thing in influencing others;
it is the only thing.*

~ Albert Shweitzer

An Architect Of Changes, Visionary Leader And Builder Of People

by

The Staff & Students of St. Michael's School

An Architect of Changes

Possessed with a remarkable creative vision and insight Fr. Augustine constantly sought for new innovations and changes in the implementation of which he was guided by his inspirations and powered by indefatigable zeal and enthusiasm. Bringing St. Michael's closer to the national mainstream by switching over its affiliation from

ICSE to CBSE was one of his innovative steps. The introduction of semester system, music in higher classes, and integrated study of Physical and Social Sciences, a policy of continuous evaluation and assessment, remedial classes for slow learners, facilities for IIT coaching in the school were the direct products of his insatiable desire for change.

A Visionary Leader:

With an eye for the future and endowed with an exquisite knack of reading the signs of coming changes, Fr. Augustine was able to provide the much needed visionary leadership, the backbone of every thriving educational institution. We pay tribute to this great visionary leader who was the Founder of **St. Xavier's College of Education**. His relentless efforts in the pursuit of one his most cherished dreams culminated in government recognition for the college. Also, **he founded the All Patna Christian Schools Principals' Association** in which he exhorted all the principals to work towards the fulfillment of a common goal for the welfare and development of young students and education as a whole in Bihar. Finally came the most historic move by Fr. Augustine in the International Year of the Girl Child – opening the gates of St. Michael's to become a full-fledged co-educational school.

A Builder of People

During the few years he was with us, we were touched by his overwhelming generosity – a generosity which knew no bounds. It was never confined to the precincts of St. Michael's only but was extended to other institutions and people as well. Many have trodden their way through this institution but he leaves an indelible imprint on the sands of time.

To Father, With Love

By

Amber Banerjee,

Principal of D.P.S., Agra

(Former student and then Senior English Teacher)



I have been a Principal now for over twenty one years and I have not done too badly as a Principal either. Of course, I must have been a fairly decent teacher of English to have got this opportunity when I was around thirty-six! I owe it all to a number of my mentors, but the two of them I am deeply indebted to are my mother, Late Saroj Banerjee, who retired as District Inspectress of Schools, Patna. And my other chief mentor is Reverend Father P.T. Augustine, S.J. under whom (oops! sorry! he would correct by reminding me: "Amber, not 'under' Principal Fr. Augustine but 'with' Fr. P.T. Augustine!") with whom I had spent most of my ten years as a teacher of English in the Senior Secondary Wing of my Alma Mater, St. Michael's Higher Secondary School, Digha Ghat, Patna.

Fr. Augustine, my greatest teacher as far as the Principal in me is concerned, is an epitome of what I consider the best definition of a leader that I have come across – a definition that makes a very clear distinction between a person who regards himself as a boss and one who is a born leader, a true leader. It goes something like this: "A boss creates fear; a leader confidence. A boss fixes blame; a leader corrects mistakes. A boss pretends to know all; a leader freely asks questions showing to his team members that he too is growing. A boss makes work drudgery; a genuine leader makes it interesting. A boss is interested in

himself or herself; a leader is interested in the team."

When Fr. Augustine took over as Principal, St. Michael's, Patna, from Fr. Tom Karthanam, I had made myself a well-established teacher of English there for two to three years already, well liked and well respected by both my students and their parents. Along with my popularity came a little bit of childlike (or childish?) pride that I was indispensable; at least, almost indispensable. My principal, Fr. Augustine, had very correctly sensed both my strength as a teacher of English and my 'weaknesses' too. At the time, I was too young and too full of myself to realise that nobody is indispensable in this world or anywhere in this world! Father had observed that I had developed the habit of coming a few minutes late to school almost daily. Yes, the lame excuse would always be the same: riding my 'Jaandaar Rajdoot and Shandaar Rajdoot' motorcycle all the way from Khagaul (around 12 kms from school), a flat tyre, carbon in the spark plug and one day, the most disturbing argument came from my end in the staff room for the benefit of my colleagues, all of whom used to love me, that there was one teacher who came on a more expensive and modern bike from Pataliputra Colony (just 3 kms from St Mike's) and was seen arriving at least ten minutes late to school! So, what did Fr. Augustine do? Did he call me to his chamber and give me a nice dressing down? No, he didn't. He had every right to do so. He knew me better than perhaps I knew myself. He tried two methods. Invariably, he would stand in my class when the first period started and as I would enter the classroom five minutes late, feeling embarrassed, he would wish me "Good morning, Amber Sir!", smile and walk away. This corrective attempt to correct an otherwise good teacher failed completely and I continued coming late.

So, what did he do as his second method? One day, I was late to school by around ten to twelve minutes and that teacher with the better mobike than mine coming from as close as Pataliputra Colony was on time on that fateful day. Just before recess, I was engaging the boys in the fourth period. Suddenly, I heard Fr. Augustine reprimanding that teacher loud enough for me to hear: "How many times have I told you, Sir, to be punctual? What kind of example are you setting as a class teacher for your kids? How can I correct other teachers who are otherwise very good but have developed this bad habit of coming late to school almost daily?" The result: I was never late to school from the next day till my last day as teacher at St. Michael's, my alma mater. And, I believe till this day, seeing that being the 'son' of St. Mike's I had just become a bit pampered, he did that role play with that teacher to help me get rid of my bad habit and I would like to believe now that he had arranged that scene with that teacher from Patliputra for my benefit. Fr. Augustine knew that I had a conscience and that I would feel bad that he had scolded the other teacher who was on time that day for being late usually but he had never scolded me once for my daily lapse and I would change myself. Surely, Father Augustine, I did and did for my good!

Here was a leader in action – a leader who did not believe in fixing blame, but had the courage of conviction in his compassion and believed in correcting mistakes of his team members.

Now, I shall proceed to tell you about one of his decisions that changed the course of my life. It was his correct understanding of and the faith in the skills and talents of his team members that made him take that decision. God had ordained that I would be the beneficiary of that

decision too! Needless to write that, like me, there must have been, scores of other beneficiaries not only in St Michael's but everywhere he served as a leader. Once again, after having worked successfully at St. Mike's for over six years, I thought that after all it was a private school and that my life would surely take a turn for the better if I joined a Kendriya Vidyalaya or even a Sainik School! How, I didn't know. Yet, I got selected for a teaching position at Sainik School, Tilaiya and I promptly accepted it and put in my papers at St. Mike's. Fr. Augustine wished me the very best and a lovely farewell was accorded to me. This was in August 1988. I went to Tilaiya, with a loaded truck full of bag and baggage and my Jaandaar Sawari Rajdoot too which clearly meant that I had gone there to stay awhile. Yes, I did not go there alone first to get a feel of the school and the place. In hindsight, it appeared a mistake, but later it proved to be a mistake that gave Fr Augustine's compassion another opportunity to 'forgive' and 'bless and welcome' St. Michael's (my alma mater) Prodigal Son with open arms and an open heart. A forgiveness and welcome that proved to be a momentous turning point in my life, in my family's life! Yes, I went to Tilaiya with my young wife, Seema and our two and a half year old son, Abhas. They had promised me a teacher's family quarter as soon as I arrived but for three months I was made to stay in the Medical Inspection Room with my wife and my vulnerably young son with students with chicken pox housed in the room adjacent to ours and sharing the same toilet! Nevertheless, I taught my best with the same zeal and involvement and won the hearts of quite a few students. August passed by and so did September, but no sign of that promised family quarter and one night the whole of Bihar (there wasn't a Jharkhand then) was shaken badly by a massive

earthquake. A wooden beam of the MI room fell beside a sleeping and oblivious Abhas and we felt enough was enough. October came and the Dussehra and Durga Puja break followed. We went home to Patna and I met Fr. Augustine and told him that I did not wish to stay there. He said, "Come back to Patna." I asked, "Really, Father? St. Michael's?" He said to me with his customary and very familiar and sweet (at times, mysterious smile as we felt sometimes, especially when he seemed to disagree with us) smile: "Not necessarily, St. Michael's; I would see how the Board of Governors of the School react to this." Equally promptly came my worried reply: "But, Father, if I am not assured of a job, how can I resign and come?" Even more promptly came his reply: "If what you are saying about things out there is really true, then why should there be any doubt in your mind? And you are a very popular English teacher of Patna. If St. Mike's doesn't welcome you back, there are other schools. May be Alfy Rozario would take you in Don Bosco's or Mrs. Rizvi might take you in her Rosebud School." I knew that Fr. Augustine was testing me if what I had said about the condition in my new school was entirely true or not. I knew that I had to pass this test and have faith in God and Fr. Augustine and that I must return to Patna immediately.

I went back to Tilaiya on the 24th of October, 1988 and put in my papers and unhesitatingly forfeited one month's salary and the three of us landed in Khagaul on the 31st of October in the same truck that carried our bag and baggage and the motorcycle. Surely enough, I went to school and met Fr. Augustine. He told me that the fateful Board meeting was scheduled for that evening and he asked me to inquire of him on the 3rd of November. This meant that I would have to remain apprehensive for two days, if not more!

Came the 3rd of November and he welcomed me with a beaming and affectionate smile and congratulated me: "You are back. Your salary would be in continuation from where you had left but since it's already November and after a month the twelfth graders would stop coming to school, so I won't disturb the school routine for just a few months as the final examinations would commence in the first week of March. For today, please go home and meet me tomorrow, but be on time!. DON'T go to the staff room now. I thanked him profusely and went home as delighted as a small girl who is about to go to "Her First Ball" in her first party frock (I taught this story by Katherine Mansfield to my students at St. Mike's.) When I met Fr. Augustine the next day, he said to me, "Till the end of the session 1988-89, you will not teach. Instead, you will act as the Centre Superintendent of the National Open School Examinations for which St. Mike's became a centre soon after you left. (It seems our school became a centre to help me to help others absorb the news that 'Amber Is Back' in a better manner.) So, you will come to school for the next one month, park your Rajdoot here in the portico itself without going to the staff room till I tell you at an opportune time, I shall announce in the staff room that your colleague, Amber Banerjee, is back." So, I began administering the NIOS examinations from the 5th of November in right earnest. This went on for a week when one day Mr. P.S. Raj, my Maths teacher when I was in St. Mike's as a student and now one of the three Vice-Principals, came and whispered into my ear: "Hey Amber! Want to go to England? Boss is arranging some such thing for you! Go, he is calling you in his chamber." I went there half nervous and half excited. Father introduced me to Mr. K.D. Sharma, the Examination Controller, CBSE and informed me that the learned gentleman was

looking for dynamic young teachers of English from CBSE schools to be selected as potential syllabus designers, text book writers, evaluators and teacher trainers for the New Course that the Board wants to introduce under the CBSE-British Council ELT Project 1989 to 1994. He would like to interview you. I could only think of your name as the two other teachers of English, who could also have been considered, do not have the requisite qualifications. So, I have recommended your name." I was interviewed by Mr. Sharma and the rest is history, as far as I am concerned. (When the news of my selection for a training programme in the UK came, Fr. Augustine wrote a congratulatory circular and had it posted on the notice board in the staff room congratulating their colleague, Amber Banerjee for the wonderful selection and thereby also announcing with pride that Amber was truly back in St. Michael's and he told me that now I could go to the staff room and meet my old colleagues freely. Two training programmes in the U.K. in 1989 and 1991 followed by me becoming a CBSE ELT Materials Producer and Advanced Teacher Trainer who must have trained over a thousand teachers in India and in the UAE and Saudi Arabia and luckily, before I decided to quit St Michael's for good to become a principal in 1992. Fr. P.T. Augustine was transferred from Patna and I was given the honour to deliver the farewell speech for him!

I am what I am because of Fr. Augustine and I am sure there are so many much greater and more significant persons in this world who are what they are because of him.

My Experience with Fr. P.T. Augustine, S.J.

by

P.S. Raj,

Former Vice Principal,

St. Michael's School, Patna



"A man's greatness is revealed not by the light that shines upon him, but by the light that shines within him"

From what I can recall from my experiences with Fr. P.T. Augustine, every single moment shared with him has been full of positivity and joy. From the very beginning till this time, he has been a man who has made a difference in my life and in the lives of so many others. He has been my mentor, my friend, philosopher and guide and so much more. I remember having worked with him when he was the Principal of St. Michael's High School, Patna. In his tenure as the Principal, I saw him walk the talk as a man who led by example. As the Head of the institution, he was known to all as a strict disciplinarian, an exemplary educationist and a visionary. He is a man in whom excellence comes from within and he inspires others to excel as well. A missionary by heart and by deeds, he has added value to the life of so many of his pupils. He is a great teacher and has been a remarkable influence in the lives of his students. He was a change-maker in the true sense; having brought co-education into an all boys' school, he saw to it that the transformation went on smoothly. As an expert in his subject, he was a true contributor who spread his wealth of knowledge in his teaching. Having known him for a long time personally, he is a helpful, honest and an honourable man. While fulfilling his duties in administration and

daily affairs, he is known by all to be efficient, dedicated and organized in his work. He has this unique strength in him that always helped him overcome difficulties and face challenges adeptly. While dealing with people, he was always very articulate and perceptive. He was a great support to all people around him - his teachers, the people whom he worked with and his beloved pupils. They all admire him, respect him and adore him even now.

Having lived by St. Ignatius' ideals and principles all his life, he has always worked for the betterment of people and has always led a humble and honest life. I wish him all the best for all his future endeavours and I believe that he will continue to work with the noble spirit that drives him.



*I was made to be a perfectionist at everything I did.
Everything was more important than what I wanted.*

~ Dennis Quaid

VII

MY FOOTPRINTS IN BARAMULLA IN THE KASHMIR VALLEY

*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then,
is not an act, but a habit.*

~ Aristotle

I had a short stint as Principal of St. Joseph's School, Baramulla, in the Kashmir Valley from July to December 1992. St. Joseph's School, Baramulla, was established in 1905 by the Mill Hill Fathers from Ireland, who had earlier come to Rawalpindi (a part of the British India at that time) at the invitation of the British Raj, to be the Chaplains of the Irish Regiment of the British Army stationed there. The Mill Hill Fathers managed and administered the School for almost eight decades, and then handed it over to the diocese of Jammu-Kashmir in around 1970.

In 1987, at the request of the Bishop of Jammu-Kashmir, the Jesuits took over the management of the School, and I was the second Jesuit to be the Principal there. Later in 2003 the Jesuits handed the School back to the diocese. St. Joseph's being such an old and prestigious school boasts of, a large percentage of the population of Baramulla being former students of this school. "Situated on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Highway in the lap of the beauteous mountains of Baramulla, St. Joseph's has been the lynchpin in the social, cultural, ethical, economic and educational metamorphoses of Baramulla town in particular and its suburbs in general".

It is also to be noted that Fr. Jerome Xavier, grand nephew of St. Francis Xavier, was the first Jesuit to set foot on the soil of Baramulla. Fr. Xavier was the head of the Second Jesuit Mughal Mission to India. In the summer of 1594 he accompanied Emperor Akbar to Kashmir, the summer capital of the Mughal empire. There was a severe famine in Baramulla that year and Fr. Jerome Xavier, according to the historical records, served the suffering people for a short period of time, using his privileged position in the Mughal court.

When I set foot on St. Joseph's School campus the valley was undergoing a great turmoil. It witnessed the height of militancy in those days. The anti-Indian sentiments were very strong not only among the militants (or the Mujahideens, as the Kashmiris called them) but also among the general public. Located near the India-Pakistan border, Baramulla enjoyed exquisite scenic beauty. The sprawling campus of the School bordered the town on one side and the military cantonment on the other. On the third side the Indian Army's telecommunication transmission tower, stood tall and was one of the main targets of attack

by the militants. Often the School was the victim of the cross fire between the militants and the military.

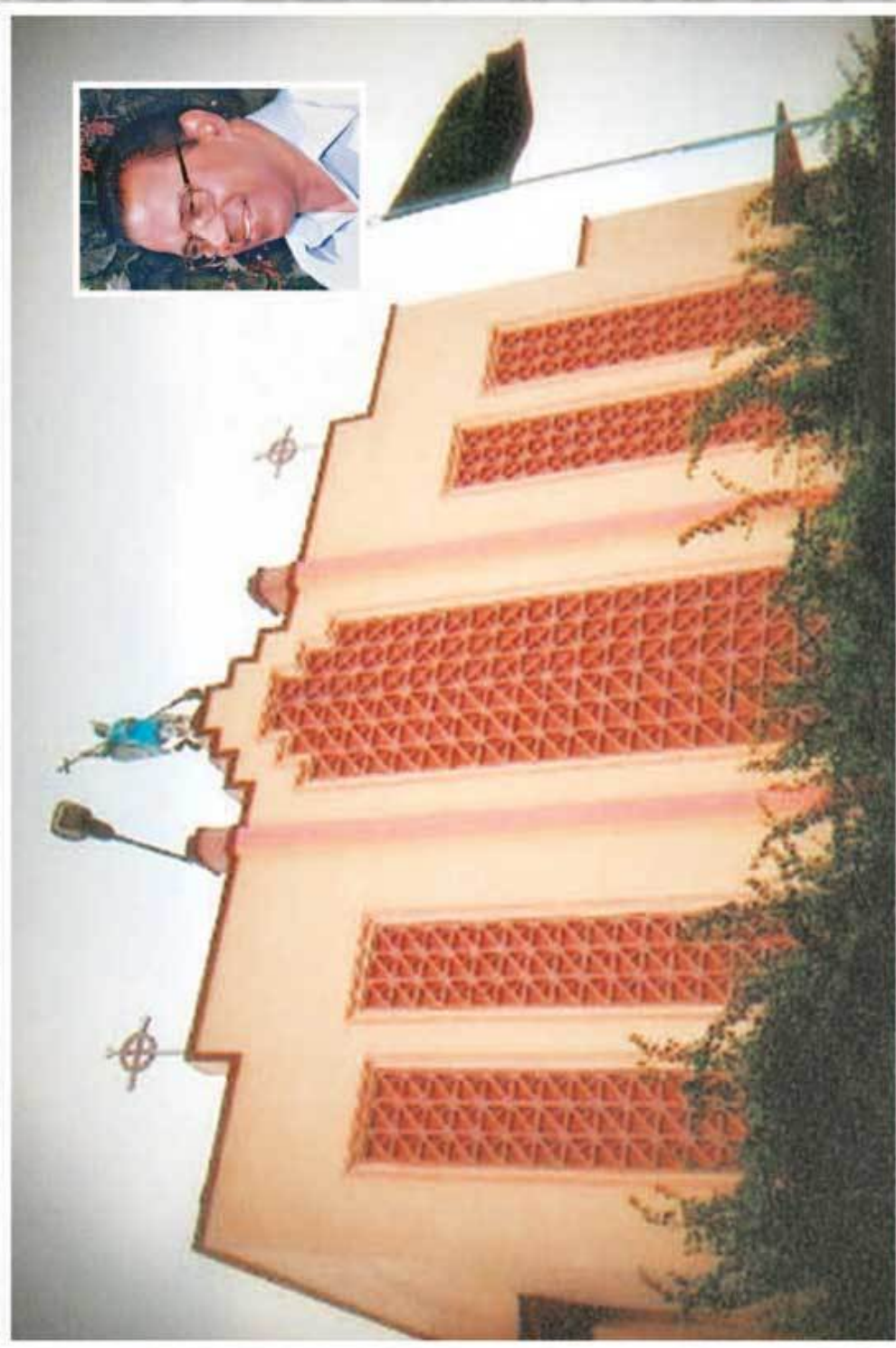
After my arrival in school I noticed that there were also divisions among the staff, based on their affiliation to different militant groups and their leaders. Above all, the relationship between the staff and the management was marked by mutual suspicion, verging on antagonism. Even though I could do nothing with regard to the situation outside the School campus during the short period of six months I was in Baramulla, I was, however, able to restore to a great extent mutual trust among the Staff as well as between the staff and the management. With some financial help from the Delhi Jesuit Society, I managed to redress some of the long-standing grievances of the staff with regard to their salary and emoluments. The staff indeed was very grateful for what I did for them.

As elsewhere, at St. Joseph's too I made quite a few improvements in the infrastructural facilities for the benefit of the Staff and the students - the chief among them being the renovated staff room, the new assembly ground for the students and what was later known as 'Fr. Augustine's Bridge'. Though my departure from there was totally unexpected, I received a warm and affectionate farewell from the Kashmiri people in December 1992 and I left for the US for a Masters Degree which I completed in one year's time and returned to Jaipur.



Excellence is not a skill. It is an attitude.

~ Ralph Marston

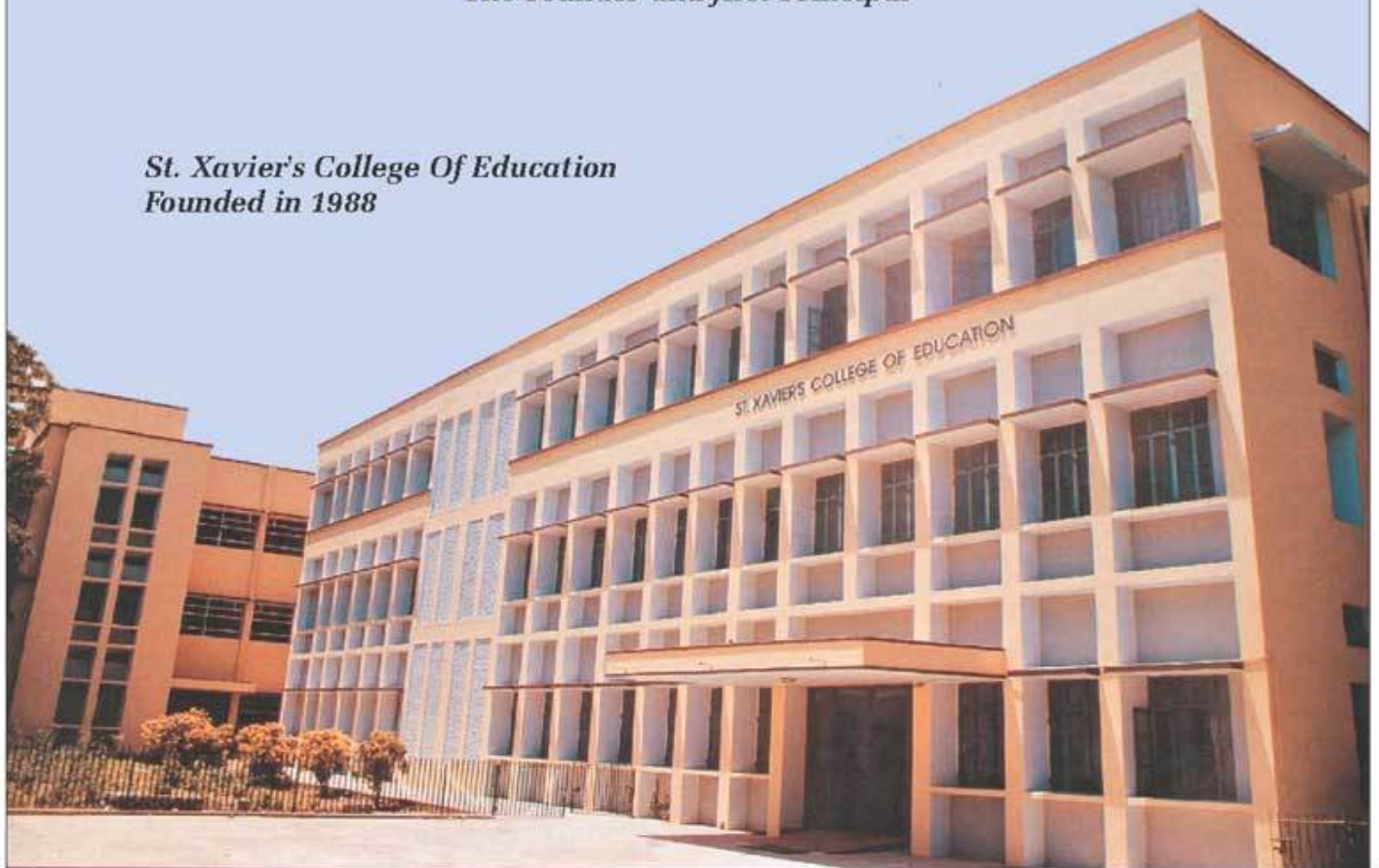


St. Michael's Higher Secondary School, Patna Established in 1858



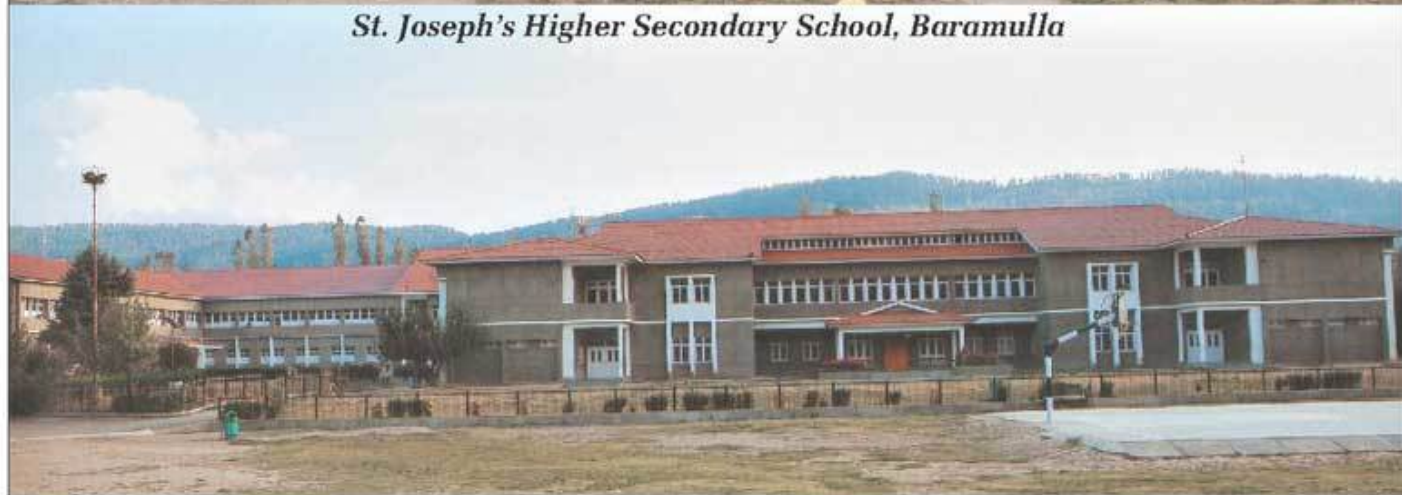
The Founder and first Principal

*St. Xavier's College Of Education
Founded in 1988*





St. Joseph's Higher Secondary School, Baramulla





VIII

ST. XAVIER'S SCHOOL, JAIPUR

*If your actions inspire others to dream more,
learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.*
~ John Quincy Adams

Twice I returned from the US after my higher studies and it was a coincidence that both the times I found myself in St. Xavier's School, Jaipur.

In 1978 when I had returned from the United States after securing an M.Ed. degree in Secondary School Administration, my first assignment was as Rector of St. Xavier's School, Jaipur. The Jesuit community of

Jaipur at that time consisted of fifteen members, most of whom were Americans, working in the School and the boarding, and fifteen Scholastics who were pursuing their college studies in Rajasthan University. It was a large Community, and some of the older members had been there for thirty or thirty five years. They loved the people of Rajasthan, and appreciated the extremely positive response they got from the students and their parents, the general public and the government.

In the history of Delhi Jesuits, Jaipur plays a very prominent role. The Jesuit pioneers had reached this historic city much before the arrival of the Patna/Delhi Jesuits. During the time of the Mughal Emperor Akbar the Jesuits had worked in Rajasthan and had even established a parish there. Later in 1729 at the invitation of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II the Jesuits reached Jaipur in order to help in setting up an astronomical observatory. These earlier stints were very short and it was in 1942 that the Jesuits from Patna province decided to make Jaipur their home, at the invitation of Mirza Ismail, the then prime minister of Jaipur to start a school in the city.

Sowing the seeds of the great saga of Xavier's, Jaipur:

Sir Mirza Ismail, the then Prime Minister of the independent State of Jaipur, visited Patna sometime in the second half of the year 1942 in order to deliver the Convocation Address at the Patna University. Fr. Marshal Moran, S.J., Principal of St. Xavier's School, Patna, who was also a member of the University Senate and Syndicate, volunteered to provide accommodation to the Prime Minister at the Jesuit Residence of St. Xavier's, Patna. (No five star hotels were available in those days. Father had a car of his own; so that he could take the PM around).

During his stay there, the Prime Minister had the opportunity to visit the School which had been started in 1939, and to interact with the senior students. Highly impressed with the excellent quality education imparted in St. Xavier's School, Patna, Sir Miza Ismail made a fervent request to Fr. Moran and Fr. Frank Loesch, S.J., the then Superior of the Patna Mission, to establish a similar school in Jaipur. He also promised to grant adequate land at a suitable site, and fifty per cent of the construction cost of buildings – classrooms, administration block, quarters for the staff and the servants – and purchase of furniture and equipments. After due consultation with all concerned, Fr. Loesch accepted the invitation from the Prime Minister of Jaipur. Thus began the Jesuit missionary enterprise in Rajputana.

Official level negotiations, both at the civil as well as the ecclesiastical level, took a considerable amount of time. Meanwhile the Capuchin missionaries, who had already been working in the area, offered to the Jesuit Fathers a small school, called St. Mary's School, which they had established at Ghat Gate in 1941. By early 1943 the School had been shifted first to Pandit Dwaraka Nanaji's place on Ajmer Road; then again to a leased building in Wali Gardens on Moti Dungri Road, behind Maharaja's College. On behalf of the Capuchin missionaries, Fr. Arthur, Principal of St. Mary's School, and his companion Fr. Ignatius, and Bishop Leo Floch made a formal request to the Jesuit Fathers in early 1943. The Jesuits accepted the offer in June 1943. The first Principal of St. Xavier's School, Jaipur, was Fr. Robert Ludwig, S.J., and he had as his companion Fr. William Hussey, S.J.

The Prime Minister insisted right from the beginning that the School should be staffed mainly by the American Jesuit Fathers; it should be

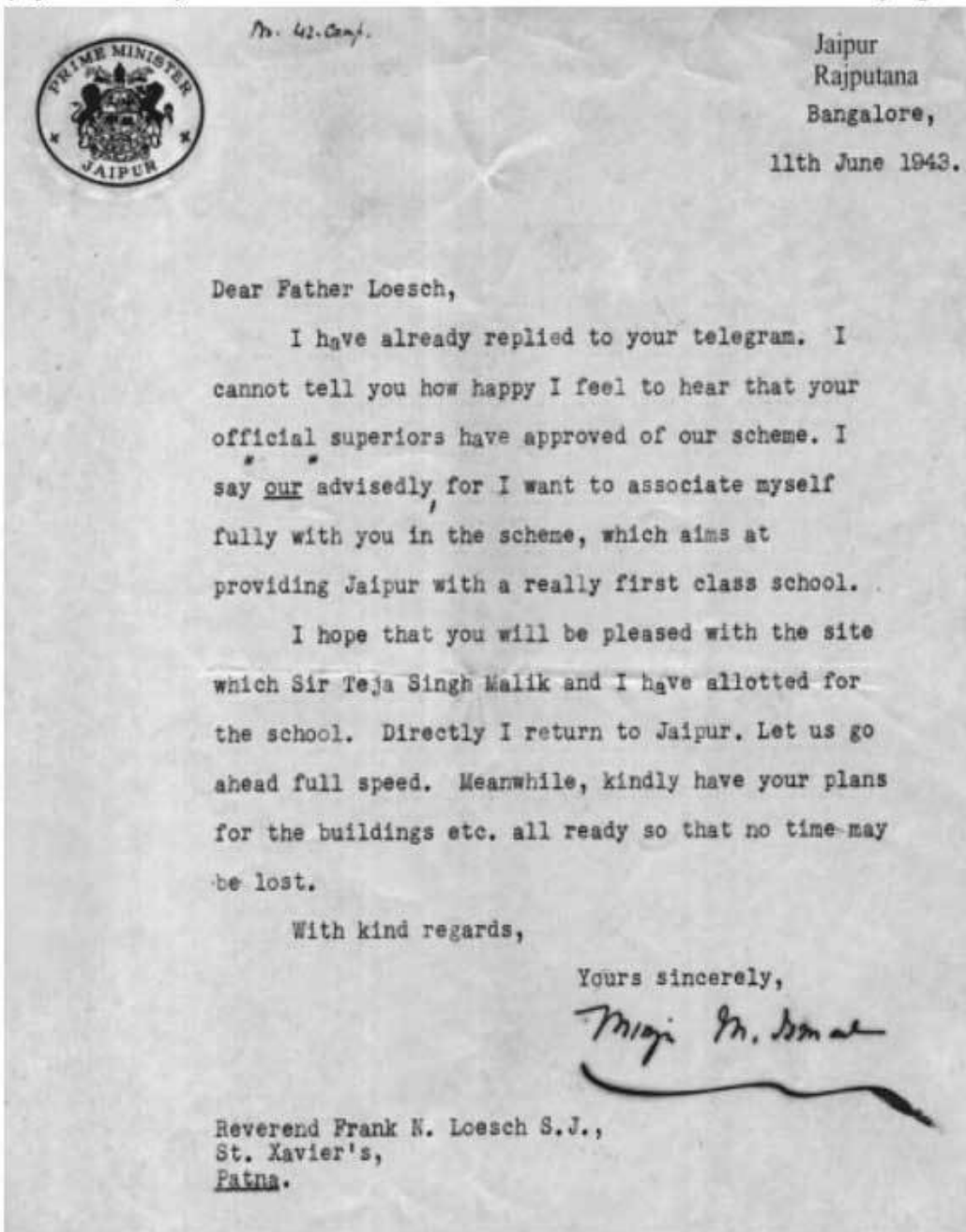
meant only “for the very best classes of the Jaipur Raj and as such the fees for the school and boarding must be higher than what was prevalent in St. Xavier’s, Patna; it should be an all-boys’ school, with boarding facilities. Sir Mirza Ismail also suggested to the Jesuits that their educational efforts should go beyond the school level. He had dreams of Jesuits establishing a regular undergraduate college as well as a medical college in Jaipur State.

The Prime Minister was indeed overjoyed to hear that the Jesuit Fathers had accepted his invitation to Jaipur to establish a world-class educational institution.

Sir Mirza Ismail and his officials had identified a convenient plot of 12 acres of land as the site for the future St. Xavier’s School, and they generously offered it to the Jesuits. The Fathers, in their turn, accepted it and also bought an additional plot of five acres, adjacent to the land given by the government. (A far-sighted vision indeed!) The Fathers moved St. Mary’s School and the Jesuit residence to the new location and renamed the school as St. Xavier’s School.

The World War II was at its peak, with its accompanying scarcity of essential necessities of life, let alone building materials and skilled labour. So the Jesuits were advised to start the school in temporary shed, while the buildings came up slowly, waiting for the end of the War. However, soon after the end of the World War, servants’ quarters and a small school building were built with materials that were available during the post-World War period. The servants’ quarters were used as residence for the Jesuit Fathers till a proper residence was built almost three decades later, in 1972. The structures that were built in the mid-1940s were demolished during the last one decade.

Sir Mirza Ismail's letter to Fr. Loesch, S.J., expressing his immense joy that the Jesuits decided to establish a St. Xavier's School in Jaipur.



Construction work for the new school building started in 1950 and it was completed in 1952. Today this magnificent edifice, the present Senior School building, facing the Bhagwan Das Road, is indeed a landmark by itself in the modern Jaipur city. The government of Rajasthan gave due consideration to the commitments made by the former Jaipur Government and its Prime Minister to the school authorities in respect of grant for school and hostel buildings, library, laboratory, etc. The Government, on 12th February 1951, paid to Xavier's, Jaipur, a sum of Rupees 4,40,000.00 for the school building and Rs 2,00,000.00 had been granted earlier. These grants were in addition to an earlier grant sanctioned in 1948 by which the school received Rs 53,000.00. The Jesuit Society owes a debt of immense gratitude to the Government of Jaipur and Rajasthan for this generous and timely help at the initial stages of their educational work in Rajasthan. The total built up area for all the buildings, except the hostel, was 76,4000 sq. ft. The construction work for the hostel building was started on 3rd Dec., 1962, and it was completed by the middle of the year 1964. The new hostel had a built up area of 21,750 sq. ft. and could accommodate about 200 boys.

The Jesuits made some unsuccessful attempts to go beyond the school work and to involve themselves with the care of the students studying in the University. In 1962 there was a proposal to purchase five acres of land near Rajasthan University and establish a hostel for the Catholic students of the University. Even though the initiative was endorsed by the Church authorities, the dream could not get materialized on account of the paucity of personnel and funds

A Jesuit Community was formally constituted, as per the ecclesiastical

law, on 30th August, 1943, with Fr. Hussey as the first Rector and Fr. Ludwig, the first Principal.

During the first four decades of St. Xavier's School and its hostel, on an annual average, there were fifteen Jesuits working in Jaipur. Thereafter the number came down to around seven. During the first four decades, most of the Jesuits working in Jaipur were American Fathers. As their number came down gradually, they were replaced by the Indian Jesuits. Their dedication and commitment to the cause of quality education during the last seventy years made St. Xavier's School, Jaipur what it is today – one of the outstanding schools in the country. By the 1960's St. Xavier's Jaipur was rated to be one of the best schools in India.

Leaving My Footprints

One of my first major tasks was to initiate and foster the changes in the pattern of school work visualized by the new educational policy of the Patna Jesuit Province, of which Jaipur was a part. Almost thirty years after India's independence, the literacy rate in the country increased considerably and people became conscious of the need for quality education. Slowly, but gradually various private agencies established good schools in various parts of the country, including Rajasthan. Quality education for all sections of people was found to be the need of the hour. St. Xavier's would no longer be an elite school reserved for "the very best classes of the Jaipur Raj", visualized by Sir Mirza Ismail. Its elitist tag would soon be removed, but efforts at high quality education will continue, for the masses as well as the classes. Consequently a series of policy changes were introduced during the early 1980's. They include:

- (a) An option for the poor as far as financial conditions permitted;
- (b) Introduction of Hindi as the medium of instruction at the primary level;
- (c) Closing down of the hostel and converting the hostel into the Primary section of the School. This was done in April 1981, after giving a two-years' notice to the boarders and their parents, employees and the general public.
- (d) For admission purposes, the neighbourhood policy was adopted.
- (e) The school became co-educational. (For thirty eight years St. Xavier's had been an all-boys' school. However, over the years the Jesuit Fathers recognized the importance of education of the girl child for the

development of a healthy society. They also realized that for the integral emotional and psychological growth of the young, the boys and girls interact with each other in a healthy manner right from their childhood. Therefore, co-education was introduced in St. Xavier's School, Jaipur, in 1989. Though the move was initially resisted by many, over the years it proved to be a step in the right direction.)

(f) Collaboration with other Religious Congregations in the management of the School. In 1986 the Sisters of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary have been collaborating with the Jesuit Fathers in the administration of the School, especially the primary section.

Changes of these types were hard for many to take. But the School authorities would not and could not ignore the evolving social realities of the country. Two decades after these policy changes, assessing again the social realities, the School would revert to a fully English medium pattern, as it is today. When I was Rector or Principal in the many educational institutions across north India, I made it a point to either personally conduct or organize various staff development programs for the on-going professional and personal growth of the teaching staff. Some of the important programs I conducted in Jaipur and elsewhere are:

- (1) Adventures in Attitudes –which would last for ten weekends involving 45 hours,
- (2) Creativity in Education
- (3) Creativity and Lateral Thinking,
- 4) Education in an Age of Accelerating Changes
- 5) Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm

6) Characteristics of Jesuit Education

The program that was most appreciated by the teachers of Jaipur was 'Adventures in Attitudes', which helped them immensely even in their personal and family life.

Another new initiative was to establish staff quarters next to the School. An acre of land was purchased in 1967 from Guru Nank Satsang Sabha, on Vardhman Path, on the southern boundary of the School campus. The construction of staff quarters was abandoned, and instead a building was purchased on Gautam Marg in 1978 at a cost of Rs 1,81,000.00. The building was used as Staff Quarters for three decades. It was rebuilt around the year 2006, and now it is being used as residence for the religious Sisters who work in the School. Its basement is being used as rooms for the Balwadi for the children from the economically weaker sections of the society.



*If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you
develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an
exception, it is a prevailing attitude.*

~ Colin Powell



Senior School Building built in 1950



St. Xavier's School, Jaipur



Sketch by Mrs. Preeti Madan



Hostel Building built in 1964 transformed into Junior School in 1981

IX

ST. XAVIER'S PARISH, JAIPUR

*Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet.
Only through experience of trial and suffering can the
soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition
inspired, and success achieved.*

~ Helen Keller

In early January 1979 when the then Patna Provincial, Fr. Abraham Puthumana, S.J., made his annual official visitation to the Jesuit Community and St. Xavier's School in Jaipur, he suggested that it would be an excellent idea if the Jesuits could get involved more in the pastoral work of the area. As an after-thought he wondered whether we could ask the Bishop to divide the Ghat Gate parish and erect St.

Xavier's as a separate parish. We did not seriously discuss this last point at that time, but the Provincial did emphasize more on the pastoral involvement of the Jesuit Community, which consisted of 14 Priests, a Brother and 14 Scholastics who were involved in their College studies. The priests had long been providing Sunday liturgy to the Catholic Community of the area, and for the nursing students and the staff at the two nearby hospitals – SMS and SDMH. The Scholastics had a few informal pastoral involvements like youth animation programs, visits to a few Catholic families, and teaching of Catechism to the children in different localities. However, there was no serious effort at the formation of a Christian community. The relationship of the Jesuit Community with the Catholics of the area could at the best be described as distant. The Catholics, though belonged to the Ghat Gate parish, hardly ever went there for regular liturgy, and the Parish Priest did not have much contact with them either.

It was in the context of the above facts that, after consultation with the Jesuit Community, I decided to request the Bishop to create a second parish in Jaipur and entrust it to us. The newly consecrated Bishop of Ajmer-Jaipur, Rt. Rev. Ignatius Menezes, visited Jaipur in early March 1979, just two weeks after assuming the office of the Bishop. Along with Fr. Albert Wilzbacher, S.J., Fr. Tony Andrade, S.J., I met the Bishop at Ghat Gate. Though it was a courtesy visit, we also made a formal request to erect St. Xavier's Parish in Jaipur. Though the Bishop had great pastoral concern, he told us that he had to consult and get the approval of the Priests' Council of the diocese. As any change is difficult for most people, there was opposition to the idea among the diocesan clergy, and so the Bishop had to do a lot of persuading, before he could

take a firm decision to establish St. Xavier's Parish. Demarcation of the new parish created further problems for the Bishop, as most Catholics in Jaipur lived in areas closer to St. Xavier's, and wanted to belong to the new St. Xavier's parish by all means. The Bishop tactfully but with pastoral concern dealt with the situation, by assuring the aggrieved families that they could continue to be part of St. Xavier's parish for all regular liturgy, but had to go to their legally approved Ghat Gate parish for official purposes only. It would take a few years for many to accept the new reality.

Second Thoughts and Reconsideration

By the time the Bishop made all preparations for the creation a St. Xavier's Parish, the Patna Provincial who actually initiated the process, had some re-thinking on the matter. He raised several objections: Parish work is not exactly specific to Jesuit apostolate, pastoral work would adversely affect our mobility, the parish would be a financial liability on the Jesuit Community, and so on.

After detailed discussions with the Community, I sent to the Provincial the following letter, signed by all members of the Community:

Dear Fr. Abraham Puthumana,

Since February this year we have been carrying on a dialogue with our Bishop regarding our involvement in the Jaipur parish. We appreciated the initiative you took in this matter at the time of your visitation in January this year. We would like to present to you the community's views on our involvement in the pastoral ministry of this diocese of Ajmer-Jaipur.

1. Although we have been here in this diocese since 1943, our work so far has been confined largely to the running of St. Xavier's

School. We have been helping the parish priest here, but with no responsibility for pastoral care. At present we feel confident that we can undertake some pastoral ministry while carrying on our educational apostolate.

2. The diocese which extends to the entire geographical area of the State of Rajasthan has only sixty diocesan priests, quite a few of whom are elderly. Except for two of the pioneering Capuchins who are still here, and the Jesuits of Jaipur, there is no religious Order of priests working in this diocese.
3. Last February when Fr. Ignatius Menezes of Lucknow diocese was appointed Bishop of this diocese, he looked towards the Jesuits for help in the pastoral ministry of the diocese, especially since the Jesuits form almost 20 percent of the clergy in this diocese. It was at this time that we took the initiative and asked the Bishop to entrust us with the pastoral care of the Christian community in the C-Scheme area where St. Xavier's is located. Being a newcomer to the diocese, the Bishop had some initial hesitation to divide the Jaipur parish and entrust one part to the Jesuits, especially since he had yet to win the confidence of the diocesan clergy. But he took up the matter seriously, and in his first clergy meeting on 2nd and 3rd May, the diocesan clergy unanimously approved the proposal for the division of Jaipur parish. The meeting also asked the Bishop to make a request to you. While it may not be possible for us to accept a large area of the diocese for evangelization work, we think that we must accept at least the minimum of responsibility in this diocese by accepting the pastoral work in one section of Jaipur.

4. Since the initiative for the division of Jaipur parish came from us Jesuits, the Bishop went ahead with the plan, once the diocesan priests gave their approval. The plan to divide the parish and to entrust one part to the Jesuits was widely publicized among the laity, the religious and priests of the diocese. Once the parish is divided, the original parish would be very small since almost 80 percent of the Christian community of Jaipur live in the neighbourhood of St. Xavier's, which would be the new parish centre. Therefore the Bishop transferred the parish priest and appointed a retired priest as the parish priest of Ghat Gate (old Parish). The new parish priest took up his assignment at the beginning of this month. The Bishop himself is expected here later this month to announce the demarcation of the two parishes of Jaipur – Ghat Gate and St. Xavier's. Since the initial proposal for the division of the parish came from us, it was perfectly legitimate on his part to go ahead with plan.
5. Ever since the new Bishop took over the diocese of Ajmer-Jaipur, there has been a tremendous revival in the pastoral ministry and evangelization work. For a better pastoral care of the people, the Bishop divided the Cathedral parish of Ajmer. Jaipur is the only other major parish in the diocese. Its division for the good of the Christian community may be blocked at the present juncture, if we refuse to act. If we like to keep pace with the development of the diocese, we should not insist on continuing only the work we have been doing for the last 36 years. In helping the diocese and the parish, we cannot insist on our own terms, since the Bishop and the diocesan clergy have something to say in the matter.

6. On the recommendation of Fr. General, Patna Province in the recent past has been thinking in terms of expanding the Jesuit presence to as many areas of North India as possible. Shouldn't we do this in a place where we already have a foothold, where our brothers have done groundwork for almost four decades, where the need is great and the opportunities are enormous? In our Province we may never reach a stage in which we can think of expansion after fulfilling all our commitments in Bihar.
7. On our part, it would be a serious breach of trust if we go back on our word to accept the responsibility for pastoral work in the neighbouring areas of St. Xavier's. The Bishop has already made all the necessary moves and preparations relying on our credibility. We would be letting him down before the entire diocese, especially the diocesan clergy, if at the present stage we refuse to act.
8. When we built the new Jesuit residence here in 1970, we built a large chapel so that it may also be used as the place of worship by the neighbouring Christian community. The Jesuit community does quite a lot of pastoral ministry, but has no freedom to organize and develop the Christian community as we would like to. Accepting responsibility for St. Xavier's parish would enable us to open ourselves out to the ambient community in a much meaningful way. We think that our involvement in the parish and the diocese will make our presence here much more meaningful and relevant.
9. With ten priests in the Jesuit residence and only one priest in the Ghat Gate parish, the Christian community of Jaipur naturally

look up to the Jesuits to give them leadership and guidance.

10. Responsibility for the parish will in no way 'bind us down and affect our mobility,' because we will have to do this work only as long as we run the school here. In fact, we can put this as a condition for accepting the parish. Our work at present or in the near future will have meaning and relevance if only we are first of all able to respond to the basic pastoral needs of the Christian community here.
11. In your letter to the Community on 31st January, 1979, you told us: "It was felt (by you and the Consultors of the Province) that there is urgent need to improve the relationship between the Jesuits and the diocese at the various levels." We have since then taken various steps to improve our relationships with the diocese and the parish. A refusal to accept the responsibility for the parish here at the present juncture will be an irreparable setback to these efforts. You also wanted that "As a member of the religious community of the diocese we should take our rightful place in the Priests' Senate and help it with our presence and intervention." Without being involved in some way in the main concerns of the diocese, our 'rightful place' will be anywhere outside the Priests' Senate, at least at the present time.
12. If we, as a community, have the responsibility to evaluate our educational work here and to propose plans and programmes for the 80's and 90's, we feel perfectly justified in urging the Province to allow us to accept the responsibilities for the new parish here, to involve ourselves in a very limited way in the pastoral concerns of the diocese, to help our Bishop who badly needs our help, to

work for the spiritual welfare of the ambient Christian community – and in doing these, to commit ourselves and the Patna Jesuits of the 90s and respond to times.

We request you, therefore, that in coming to a decision you consider not only the needs of the diocese of Patna but also the context and exigencies of the place where we work, and the views and feelings of the men who are here, not by their choices, but by reason of their religious commitments.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. P.T. Augustine S.J.,

Rector,

Jesuit Community of Jaipur.

We had sufficiently convincing answers to his objections and arguments against his apprehensions which were finally accepted by the Provincial and his Consultors. So we got the definite approval from the Jesuit Society, with the proviso that the Rector of the Community would be officially appointed as Pastor by the Bishop, that the new Parish would be the responsibility of the Jesuit Community as a whole, that the facilities of the School should be put at the disposal of the Parish whenever needed and feasible. The Bishop also gave some norms of procedure to facilitate cordial relationship between the two parishes, including the arrangement that the cemetery at the Sacred Heart Parish would be meant for both parishes.

Bishop Ignatius appointed me, Rector of St. Xavier's, as the first Parish Priest of the newly erected St. Xavier's Parish. The Bishop inaugurated the new parish on Sunday, 2nd December, 1979, with a solemn

Eucharistic liturgy in which a large number of parishioners enthusiastically participated. The parish was dedicated to St. Francis Xavier whose feast is celebrated on 3rd December. Assuming this new and additional responsibility, I expressed the gratitude of all the parishioners to the Bishop and the diocesan clergy and the Jesuit Provincial. Another milestone in my striving for the Greater Glory of God!

Initial Challenges and Sustained Growth

Soon the Jesuits realized that none of the fourteen priests had any experience of being a parish priest. Rubrics for various celebrations, especially the administration of the sacraments, had to be learned; the Canon Law provisions pertaining to the various pastoral aspects had to be learned or re-learned; a census of the Catholic population had to be taken; those who regularly neglected the practice of their faith had to be counseled, the spiritual life of the Catholic community had to be revived; various Registers for Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage and Burial, etc., had to be bought and maintained. These and many other challenges of the new parish I faced with enthusiasm, courage and determination. The Pastor at the Ghat Gate parish was extremely cooperative. The members of the new parish were very generous in lending a helping hand to me and the other Jesuits. Fr. Tony Andrade, S.J. and Fr. George Karamayil, S.J. were my enthusiastic assistants. While Fr. Tony and later Fr. Dion Rasquinha, S.J. directed the youth activities, especially the Choir, Fr. George was the pastoral-minded, charismatic priest, who in the company of one or two Scholastics, would go out to the lanes and bye-lanes of the city where our Catholics lived, visit the families, take census, inquire about the members of the

family, care for the sick, identify the many marriage cases that were to be rectified, give pastoral counseling to those who had given up going to the Mass and taking/receiving sacraments. Fr. George also arranged for weekend retreats for small groups of twenty or twenty-five parishioners at Nazareth Niwas. He extended this facility to the nursing students and staff in the city. His simplicity, piety and persuasiveness, combined with his youthful energy and characteristic dynamism, enabled the new parish to develop into a truly Christian community. Fr. Tony, Fr. Dion and the Scholastics inspired and motivated the youth to be actively involved in all parish activities. Other Fathers in the Jesuit Community, especially Fr. Wilzbacher and Fr. Augustine Ambrose, S.J., rendered their invaluable services to the parishioners. A very special mention must be made about Fr. Wilzbacher. His devout religious life, his piety and simplicity, his devotion to duty and respect for authority, his dedication and commitment to the Christian community, his very special care for the poor and the underprivileged and his personal example of a true priestly life will be remembered by all those who knew him. He spent 37 years of his life as a Jesuit educator and a friend of the poor in Jaipur. All our efforts at establishing a vibrant parish got immensely enthusiastic responses from the parishioners. One tangible sign of this response was the substantial increase in the number of people attending the Sunday liturgy and their active participation in it. The first major celebration of the new parish was the Christmas of 1979. The Parish Choir, under the leadership of Mrs. Lennie Gonsalves and Ms. Hayacinth Viego, had long days of practice, and then from 12th December we visited all the families of the new parish and sang the Carols for them, ushering in the Christmas spirit. The carol singing in

the families went on from 5.00 to 11.00 p.m., and the choir was always accompanied by one or two priests. There was an overwhelming response from all families. The midnight Mass was celebrated in the Senior School Hall. The preparations were made by the parishioners, especially by the youth, who ensured that all details of the liturgy and the social get-together on the grounds after the liturgy were well taken care of. To our surprise, the hall could not contain the large congregation of over 1500 people, and they accommodated themselves in the hall, the adjacent corridors and classrooms, attending the beautiful, well-planned Christmas liturgy. An innovation in the liturgy was the Christmas Proclamation, sung by Herman Rodrigues in his melodious voice which reverberated in the hall and surrounding areas and set the congregation in the proper Christmas devotional mood. During the week after the Christmas up to the New Years day there were parish celebrations. These celebrations proved to be an integral part of building up of the parish community.

The first Holy Week Services were conducted in the specially arranged area on the lawns, so that the large crowds of people could be accommodated comfortably in the summer season. Gradually a good number of non-Catholics and even non-Christians began to attend the Christmas and Holy Week Services. The pastoral work of the customary Easter blessing of the homes was shared by all the members of the Jesuit Community. This enabled each of the Jesuits to come closer to the Catholics, and vice versa. The Catholic community had a very positive influence on the Jesuits as priests and religious. Two years after the establishment of the Parish, the Provincial, Fr. Abraham Puthumana, commented: "The parish is the best thing that happened to the Jesuit

Community of Jaipur in recent years.” Over two decades later, at the funeral of Fr. Willmes, he made a further comment to me “Fr. Augustine, among the many things you have done and the many institutions you have established in various places, the best is St. Xavier's Parish in Jaipur.”

From the beginning, as the Pastor I insisted that, after the Sunday liturgy in the Church, people should get out and spend some time in the open area, getting to know one another and renewing friendships. Socializing on these regular occasions and celebrating the special ones ought to be an essential part of parish life. These non-liturgical events also contribute enormously to the building up of the parish community. I also insisted that the Parish Priest would never ask from the pulpit for financial contributions for any purpose. The Parish Council, which was established soon after the inception of the Parish, was entrusted with the responsibility of looking after any such needs.

The All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF) for the college students and the Legion of Mary for the older generation were established, and they greatly helped in the revival of spiritual life in the parish. The Jaipur Catholic Association, affiliated to its national organization, took shape under the leadership of Mr. Michael Castelino.



St. Xavier's Parish Church, Jaipur



With Mother Teresa and Maharaja Bhavani Singh of Jaipur



*Mother Teresa in consultation with Fr. P.T. Augustine
on the establishment of a Home for the dying destitutes in Jaipur*

Missionaries of Charity
46A, Lower Circular Road
Calcutta-700016.

SPW

30/3/86

Dear Fr. Augustine

'Thank you' does not express what I want to say to you for all you have been and done for our Sisters and the Poor of Jaipur. God love you.

I am sending the letters for the different people - I do hope they are alright. I hope we will soon be able to start building - so that during this year we can have both the homes - being the year of our People.

Take care of our Sisters spiritual life - so that they

grow in holiness - through
their close contact with
Jesus in the distressing
disguise of the Poor. Help
them to prep the work - by
doing it with Jesus, for Jesus
to Jesus.

My prayer for you is that
you give Jesus a free hand
to use you without consulting
you - ask the same for me.

God bless you
Lu Teresa MC

P.S. I am sending you some prayer
card for the people who have
been good to us.
Lut

Shree

Calcutta 13/1/80

Dear Fr. Augustine,

Thank you for all you have done, are doing and will do for our Sisters in Jaipur.

I am sure you will be glad to know that the 4 Sisters will come with Sr. M. Dorothy on the 10th Feb and will open the house on the 11th Fr. in honour of Our Lady.

I do hope to come to Jaipur. Feb-March.

May God's blessing be with you and your people during 1980 - is my prayer for you and for them.

God-bless you
All Teresa m

Stationery of Christy
144 Lower Circular Road
Calcutta-700016

I look forward to coming
to Jaipur

Please pray for me and
Our Poor.

God bless you
Lu Teresa M.



St. Xavier's College, Jaipur, established in 2010



*St. Xavier's College, Jaipur, on the Nazarath Niwas property
donated by Dr. Mary Aquino Nazareth*

Missionaries of Charity and the Home for the Dying Destitutes in Jaipur

Soon after the establishment of the Parish, I requested the Bishop to invite Missionaries of Charity to Jaipur to establish a home for the aged. The Bishop wrote to Mother Teresa and got a positive reply without delay. I assured Mother Teresa that I would extend all possible spiritual and material help to her Sisters in Jaipur. In fact, I accompanied the first batch of three Sisters who arrived in Jaipur on 10th February, 1980 and lived for over two years in a rented flat in Sangram colony, which I had arranged for them. Soon they began their works of charity among the poorest of the poor in Jaipur. They were also a great help in the Parish, teaching catechism to the children on Sundays, preparing the children for their First Holy Communion and Confirmation, preparing young couples for their marriage, arranging the parish church for Mass on special occasions, etc. At the request of Mother Teresa, I searched for an appropriate piece of land for the Sisters to buy and establish their convent and home for the aged. As all my prolonged efforts failed, I requested Patna Provincial permission to donate a piece of land which St. Xavier's School owned across the road, which had been originally intended for staff quarters. With his permission the Jesuit Community donated the land to the Sisters. Mother Teresa insisted that the building to be constructed should be a single-storied one, as she thought at that time that a multi-storied building would give the impression of a rich institution! The foundation stone for the new building for the Sisters' residence and the home for the aged was laid on 16th March, 1981 by Mother Teresa, in the presence of several ministers, other dignitaries and the parishioners. The actual construction work started much later. Fr. Willmes and I who supervised the construction, made sure that the

foundation would be fit for a three-storied building, in view of future requirements for expansion. The construction was completed and the building was blessed by Bishop Ignatius on 14th April, 1984. The Sisters soon moved into their new residence and set up the home for the aged, which was started with about 15 inmates. Today it has got 265 inmates and seven Missionaries of Charity to look after them

Mother Teresa's Visit to Jaipur

Mother Teresa informed me on 7th March 1981 that she would make a one-day visit to Jaipur a week later. As she had received Nobel Peace Prize and Bharat Ratna just a year or so earlier, and since the work of the Missionaries of Charity was highly appreciated, there was tremendous public enthusiasm to welcome her to Jaipur. The Reception Committee consisting of the parishioners, senior government officials and prominent citizens of Jaipur under my direction and supervision worked hard for a whole week making arrangements for a fitting reception. It was an extremely difficult task, as innumerable groups and institutions wanted Mother Teresa to address them. Finally on the day of her first and last visit to Rajasthan, on 14th March 1981, she addressed nine huge gatherings – all in twelve hours' time– the most prominent among them being the Civic Reception at the SMS Stadium, the reception given by the Rajasthan University and finally the reception given by about 15000 students of 29 different schools on St. Xavier's grounds. She also found time to attend the Mass and address the parishioners in the Church. It was one of the most memorable days of the parish. Chief Minister, Mr. Jagannath Pahadia, Chief Secretary, Mr. M.M.K.Wali, Home Secretary Mr. Anandi Lal Rungta, Ministers Mr. Parasuram Maderna and Mrs. Kamala Beniwal and Director General of

Police Mr. D.P. Gupta, and many other prominent citizens of Jaipur were very helpful in arranging the various programs of Mother Teresa. On behalf of the Government of Rajasthan, the Chief Minister gave a cheque of one lakh Rupees (in those days a rather substantial sum) for the construction of the home for the aged.

The Jaipur Catholic Social Service Society

From 17th to 19th July, 1981 in Jaipur there was torrential rain continuously for 48 hours, and the rainfall in those two days exceeded the annual average. There was widespread devastation, destruction and loss of lives in Jaipur and surrounding districts. Bishop Ignatius requested me to undertake relief measures on an emergency basis, and the necessary funds would be made available by international agencies like Caritas and Misereor. With a core group of volunteers I immediately took up relief and rehabilitation works in seven seriously affected villages off the Agra Road, about 20 to 25 kilometers from the heart of the city. The volunteer group was expanded to include nurses and doctors and other professionals from all religious denominations, and a registered society was formed with the title: Jaipur Catholic Social Service Society. The JCSSS did commendable work in those villages during the next three years: constructed 375 one-room houses for those who lost their houses, gave agricultural help in terms of seeds and fertilizers to the farmers, conducted adult literacy programs with the help of the students and staff of the various Catholic schools in Jaipur, and built and established a primary school in Mukundpura village, which had the dubious distinction of being totally illiterate. This school is from 1st to 4th Standard, and today all the 80 families of the village are literate, thanks to the efforts of JCSSS. Mr. Pankaj Jain,

Dr. Winston Tolan, Mrs. Lennie Golsalves, Ms. Hycinth Viego and the sisters from Missionaries of Charity helped me a lot in the relief and the rehabilitation works.

The Parish, School and the Jesuits in Jaipur

In 1980 the Jesuits took the decision to admit to St. Xavier's School all Catholic children of the parish who sought admission. Many were given substantial fee concessions too. Over the years this policy enabled many Catholic children to get a good Catholic education. The School also threw open all its facilities to the parish and the parishioners whenever they were needed. The parishioners began to feel a greater sense of belonging towards this great educational institution and the Jesuits felt very much the same about the parish community. The parish enabled them to grow in their priestly charisma through the frequent interaction with the Catholic community.

There is a time and Season for Everything

In June 1984, it was time for me to leave Jaipur in order to take up my new assignment as Principal of St. Michaels Higher Secondary School, Patna. By then the parish had grown and developed into a vibrant community. At the farewell Mass on 21st June, 1984, I thanked all the parishioners for all their help and support in establishing St. Xavier's parish. From the oldest to the youngest, everybody had made his/her contribution in one way or the other. I specifically thanked many parishioners whose contributions were unique: Mr. Martin, Mr. P.E. Francis, Mr. Joe Lobo, Mr. Michael Castelino, Mrs. Lennie Gonsalves, Ms. Hayacinth Viego, Mr. Claudie Viego, Mr. Herman Rodrigues, Dr. Daisy Gonsalves, Dr. Patricia Vickers, Mr. C.V. Mathen, "Daddy Paul", Mr. K.J. Sebastian, Mr. Vincent, Mr. A.J. Joseph, Mr. V.I. Sebastian, Mr.

Jacob, Ms Mary Ann, Ms. Pauline, Mr. M. A. Augustine and many, many others. I thanked the youth and especially the choir for their generous cooperation and contribution to a very meaningful liturgy every Sunday. More especially I thanked the Bishop who not only erected the new parish, but gave all the encouragement and support to the parishioners by his visits, exhortations and celebrations of the Eucharist on special occasions like the days of First Communion and Confirmation as well as the feast of the patron of the Parish, St. Francis Xavier. I summed up my role in the parish by quoting a modified version of the famous words of my patron, Saint Augustine: "Like you I am a man, with you I am a Christian, and for you I am a priest."

St. Xavier's College, Jaipur

In November 1978 Dr (Mrs.) Mary Aquino Nazareth, a friend and benefactor of the Jesuit Society, died in Jaipur. She had left her last Will magnanimously, donating her house – Nazareth Niwas - and property on Hathroi Fort Road, for educational purposes of St. Xavier's School. She also bequeathed all her bank balance and jewellery, amounting to about 6,50,000.00 for scholarships for medical students. It took almost five years for me to get the Will probated in a court of law with the active help of the Executors of the Will, headed by Mr. Mahendra Singh of Achrol who had been an alumnus of St. Xavier's School, Jaipur, in its first batch of students.

For over two decades the building and property were used for various educational purposes, including a vocational training centre. When the Jesuits decided to enter into the field of higher education in 2007, this property was chosen as the venue for St. Xavier's College, Jaipur.



X

MY SECOND TERM IN JAIPUR

*And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count.
It is the life in your years.*

~ Abraham Lincoln

After my first innings at Jaipur I left for St. Michael's and after a short stint at Baramullah, followed by a year of sabbatical in the US, I returned to Jaipur again in March 1994. When I reached Xavier's as the new Principal for the second innings the 50 year old school was well established and had become the most reputed school not only in Rajasthan but all over the country. Right from the beginning, Jaipur

Xavier's was a favourite place for many Jesuits, and there was plenty of scope for educating the youth and inculcating in them sublime human values. The School adopted as its motto *Deus Fortitudo Mea*. With God as their strength, the Jesuits made an incalculable service to the nation.

At the time of my arrival as its new Principal (though apparently the school was run very smoothly) there was a need to strike a new cordial relationship with staff and the management which had not been very smooth, (known only to the insiders), for a few years. The Jesuits are known for their ability to strike a cordial relationship with the lay staff and take them into confidence in all the work they undertake in their respective missions.

But in Jaipur, since mid 80's there had been a problem with the staff due to lack of clear cut policies regarding the appointment of the new staff as well as giving them yearly increments in their salary. There was no standard procedure or government rules followed in this regard. This rift had widened by the time I reached there and there were rumours of the staff going on a strike. They were already coming to work wearing black badges. 'A stitch in time saves nine'- similarly due to unattended problems that were not redressed by the management at appropriate times, the staff had all kinds of grievances. Their greatest problem was that none from the side of the management was willing to give them a patient hearing. In the meantime the staff union had fallen into the hands of the outside elements that were instigating them against the management. The problem had in fact gone out of hand.

As the Principal I decided to listen to them. I even personally attended their meetings and gave them a patient hearing. Through this I regained their confidence and offered to provide them with the necessary help

and support. After due consultation with the Provincial I appointed one of the senior most teachers - apparently their leader, as the vice-principal. I knew the risks involved in this decision; but this was a risk worth taking. I, on my side, fulfilled all their reasonable demands and he on his side made teachers work to the greatest satisfaction of the management, students and parents. After this incident never in the past 20 year history of Xavier's, Jaipur was there ever a union meeting of the staff. The so-called union ceased to exist and a serious problem was resolved very deftly.

My plan was to undertake a number of developmental works without huge investments; I noticed that some areas on the campus were not fully utilized. I developed those facilities. One such facility was getting a new tennis court. I invited the great cricketer Ajay Jadeja to school and inaugurated cricket coaching in school. He on his behalf invited a few more celebrities who addressed the students. All these motivated the students greatly. I roped in a few more celebrities like Kiran Bedi who came to school and addressed the students on various issues.

At the end of my first year things started looking up. Everyone began to notice changes taking place. One area of the campus used to be the municipal dumping ground. As a result of the waste accumulated the soil was not very fertile. After getting the mud removed I got trees planted and ensured that the campus looked green and lush. Similarly the swimming pool that we had from the beginning was above the ground and the water from the pool was used for watering plants. But there was the problem of leakage. So I undertook the renovation of the pool and set up a filtration plant for the pool water. Reuse of water saved lot of electricity.

What I accomplished, as usual, was not great things; but I made great things happen through my innovative touches. I didn't build any magnificent edifice, but I made the edifice magnificent in my own way.

"All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them", said Walt Disney, the founder of the world famous chain of Disneyland. The Jesuits had not only great dreams for the people of Rajasthan and India, they had a spiritual mandate to strive constantly and perseveringly for the Greater glory of God in the better service of the people. As John Dewey say, "Arriving at one goal is the starting point of another." The Jesuits in Jaipur constantly seek ways and means to build something more on what has already been accomplished by the efforts of their predecessors. We do have many constraints and limitations. But we have deep faith and trust in the Providence of God. As the motto of St. Xavier's School, Jaipur, says, "Deus Fortitudo Mea", God is my (our) strength, in order to pursue all our dreams and visions we need zeal, enthusiasm and passion. The Jesuits who built up Xavier's Jaipur inspire the present day Jesuits in Jaipur to be constantly ready for the greater and the better... ALWAYS. "Onward, forward, upward...." Such is the legacy of this great institution over the past seventy years.



*I'm a perfectionist, and I always think that I can do better
what I have done, even if it's good.*

~ Luciano Pavarotti

XI

MESSAGES OF APPRECIATION

*Many people will walk in and out of your life,
but only true friends will leave footprints on your heart.
~ Eleanor Roosevelt*

Our Tryst with Fr. P.T. Augustine, an eminent Jesuit

By

Samuel Johnson,

Head of the Department of English, SXS, Jaipur

It was almost 20 years ago, but I can still very distinctly recall the words uttered in a crisp, deep baritone and heard in rapt awed silence: "I have spread my dreams beneath your feet, tread softly for you tread on my dreams".

Even W.B. Yeats might not have had so much faith and conviction when



he wrote those lines. Thus began our tryst with Fr. P.T. Augustine, S.J. when he delivered his maiden address to the staff and students of St. Xavier Jaipur in March 1994. Even today I am not sure whether it was a prayer or a lease briefing or both. One thing was however certain- we were all in it together.

The bonding between the staff and administration grew when we were informed that he was not only the Principal but also the Rector and the Parish Priest – unprecedented in the history of Xavier, Jaipur. It only conveyed to us the faith reposed in him by the Jesuit Society. It was an acknowledgment of his administrative, Scholastic and Spiritualistic leadership.

Perhaps, it was also one of the reasons why we had absolute faith and trust in his leadership. He also had this very unusual knack of making each one of us feel special and extraordinary proud to be his companion and partners. We all treaded so softly, gently but most confidently to realize his/our dreams.

As the principal of Xavier's he had an almost fanatical obsession with 'Excellence' and he imbibed in all Xavierites the spirit of being 'better' just not be complacent with the best.

"Best is stagnation", he said. "Better", he said, is the key to excellence. Higher the achievement, higher the excellence and a better life".

With his unshakable trust in the capability of the staff and students, he did bring about perceptible swing to greater height and perfection. The Graduation Day ceremony which he resurrected with great sanctity will be cherished by all students and paint their lives with colours. His keen aesthetic sense combined with his foresight and engineering skills gave Xavier's the magnificent Rose Garden, the

filtration plant for the swimming pool, the 160 KW transformer, the acoustically perfect auditorium, international standard cricket pitches etc,

Never short of energy, he also ensured that the intellectual and academic pitch was better still an unprecedented knock out was achieved when in 1996, 19 students were selected for IIT, 6 for the Maths Olympiad, 13 for NTSE and 6 for AIPT. But he did not just build structures and academic performance; more importantly he built men and women of character, who cared not only for the betterment of themselves, but for the less privileged and the uncared for.

His pioneering association with PRAYAS and the yeoman service and dedication rendered at NIRMAL HRIDAY are lesser known aspects of his personality. For 39 months he relentlessly kept on spreading his dreams and nurturing them; for 39 months he excelled and preached excellence and when he parted in March 1997 he knew that both had taken root.

He left behind a rejuvenated, greener and more vibrant Xavier's. He himself on his departure looked more youthful with jet black hair duly emulated by the staff; and of course all of us had a black suit and a red tie in our wardrobe - such was his following. And yet he kept a very modest, friendly and unassuming demeanour always reiterating 'The road to success is always under construction'.

What a Jesuit!!! When comes such another?

Fr. P.T. Augustine, A Jesuit Par Excellence

Mrs. Archana Sharma

PGT History,

St. Xavier's School, Jaipur



My first introduction to this magnanimous personality was enigmatic. In my case the differences with the management of the previous school loomed large discouraging me to continue in the same line. It was at this moment my introduction to Father Augustine proved favorable to my career. He not only stood by me and supported me, by selecting me for the vacant post of History PGT at St. Xavier's, Jaipur but also established a bond of trust that has lasted till today.

His clear and firm statement: "I am concerned with your present and how you fare in St. Xavier's, not with your past. I don't go by hearsay and I use my own logic" was quite a welcome surprise. He stood tall and strong since then in my mind as a man who had upright and upfront approach towards his decisions, who looked beyond the superficialities of life and actually valued the inherent talent and essence in others.

Being appointed in an all boys' school as a young teacher and facing the toughest class Commerce and History was not altogether a ball game. It did leave me apprehensive about the strategies to be used to control and engage the young and immature minds. Father Augustine's austere approach towards the students instilled a sense of security and confidence in a teacher as new as I was.

A simple man with extraordinary potential, Father never let his life run in an ordinary way; he always did something that nobody else could

dream of; he imparted his own signature by creating something that would dazzle his surroundings.

If it is true that God's creative principle works through human touch then he was instrumental in bringing about many transformations in his revolutionary tenure. Some of these are—setting up of the Language Lab, filtration plant ,installation of transformer ,creating a patch of color and fragrance by landscaping a majestic Rose Garden. Graduation Day was revived by him by imparting it, its due status. Its sanctity and solemnity continues to be cherished by the students and parents till date.

An inspirational and dynamic Jesuit, he is an original thinker. Emphasizing practical wisdom, he has transformed and touched the lives of so many students all over the globe. His words are a blend of knowledge and guidance, delivered with simplicity and humor, a powerful and unbeatable combination that touches the lives and hearts at the same time.

With statements like "Road to success is always under construction", "Best is stagnation, better is the key to excellence, not just the best, but better than the best " he immediately strikes a chord with the people.

The essence of his life as an administrator was an amalgamation of Awareness, Belongingness, Commitment, Direction and Delegation. Like an able administrator he showed awareness towards the needs of his staff. Despite his hard exterior he makes people comfortable and does not create a fear psychosis. One can actually discuss one's problems and meet a patient listener on the other side.

Along with awareness comes belongingness bringing importance to share a cup of tea with the staff members during school intervals and

board duties which he regularly did. His commitment towards his work is exemplary. Tactful in giving directions and delegation of duties he can extract the best out of everyone.

Father Augustine's persona works as a touchstone; as anyone coming in contact with him would always be inspired to be better and give more. Apart from his contributions within the school and his Jesuit Order, he has been closely associated with PRAYAS a voluntary body helping the poor and needy.

A philanthropist at heart, not many people know about his contributions and dedicated service rendered at Nirmal Hriday [Mother Teresa Home in Jaipur]. These are few lesser known aspects of his life which escapes one's sight despite his blooming personality.

Most people who know Father Augustine as a congenial person also know that the smiling self who steps out the office is a great task master on his chair. Nothing escapes his sharp scrutiny. Every written or verbal recording is implemented after serious perusal thus leaving behind a feeling of awe not only as an academician but as a human. His slow poised stride itself exhibits his consistent inner sanctum.

To sum up as a learner and as a teacher, I am only reminded of the lines from Rumi which seem to speak rightly of this great human.

"You were born with potential
 You were born with greatness and trust
 You were born with ideals and dreams
 You were born with greatness
 You were born with wings".

An Outstanding person who believes in Action and not Merely words

By

Mrs. Amita Shammi,

Senior English Teacher,

St. Xavier's School, Jaipur



SEASONS COME AND SEASONS GO....change is the law of Nature. But can that change bring in welcome relief to the people affected by it? That is what Fr. P.T. Augustine achieved during his short stay at Xavier's, Jaipur. It would be no exaggeration if we call Fr. Augustine a Principal of principles, an outstanding person, who believes in actions rather than words. As a matter of fact, his spirit of action is so contagious that we were always kept on the run - a sort of roller-coaster ride! As our Principal he always looked for possibilities of improvement in the school – the result of it is a new face lift of the school campus.

“I saw an angel in the marble and I just chiseled till I set him free”. These words of Michelangelo reflect an important facet of Fr. Augustine's nature. He realized that an architect perfects an image and finally sets it free; so the teachers were given sufficient freedom to work imaginatively and creatively using their constructive insight. The result is that an imprint of his bearing on our newly-carved and shaped personalities can easily be felt.

Father Augustine used to share with the students and teachers so many meaningful and inspiring words every day in the school assembly that they continue to ring in our ears. He once mentioned that the “Road to success is always under construction” and rightly so, for when Fr. Augustine joined our school this work of construction was undertaken

by him with an undaunted spirit of a revolutionary. He continued to pave the path towards perfection against high and mighty winds of challenges. Winning confidence and friendship of the senior students, developing leadership qualities along with high regard for self discipline are to name just a few of his numerous contributions.

The Xavier's staff has always looked up to the able-guidance of a competent leader. Fr. Augustine was the torch bearer for us. Every aspect of administration functioned smoothly in harmony under his worthy guidance. He enlightened us with his ever novel vistas of change whether it was the mega-Xavier Fair, School Sports Day or even admission test for Class I. Teachers felt a sense of pride in the equality and justice ensured by him. The effect of his worthy administrative ability has shown itself in many ways. Transpired with a sense of well being and harmony, the relation between the staff and management has touched new heights.

Earlier there were differences between the staff and the management. Fr. Augustine's practical and straight forward approach smoothened out the rough edges within no time. He is a man you can trust, his "no" means "NO" always and his "yes" means "YES" always.

The well-being of the school was the top priority for him and it guided all his actions. Father in the true sense, was an able administrator far-seeing statesman and a visionary who knew how to be tough at the right time with the right people and let the instruments do the rest to produce a blend of music!

A Man of Indomitable zeal and indisputable Professionalism



By Jagdeep Singh, Secretary PTA, St. Xavier's School, Jaipur

Much had been said, and very aptly, about the school reaching the very pinnacle of success during Fr. P.T. Augustine's tenure in academics, extracurricular activities and games, giving a spruced-up look to this lovely campus and buildings of St. Xavier's etc. Much had also been said about the up-gradation of facilities in the school for which the students as well as the staff will always remain indebted to him.

I don't have even one bit of hesitation in saying that such was his level of professionalism, such was his penchant for perfection and above all, such was his style of decision-making that he could well have been the Chief Executive of a multinational company with his rare charisma of an able administrator. Rarely I saw him avoid taking tough decisions; seldom had I seen him dither or dilly-dally and never had I seen him not calling a spade a spade.

But despite his indisputable professionalism, Father was certainly not a hard-boiled professional. There was a human side to his professionalism which could be gauged by the concern he showed to the handicapped and the underprivileged in not only giving admissions but helping them as well.

Not many people in Jaipur remember that in 1981 (and I was witness to it) it was primarily due to his unabated efforts that Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity were able to open a home for the sick and dying destitutes in the city. Can there be a bigger contribution to the city of Jaipur? I don't think so.

Not many people know about Fr. Augustine's efforts of working for the organizations like 'PRAYAS' a vocational institution for the mentally handicapped of which he was a patron. While people were only lauding his efforts made at the school- he in his own quiet way was working to bring about a social integration in the true sense of the term.

Apart from his most obvious achievements in the fields of academics and games and infrastructure he also revived the nearly defunct P.T.A. What's more, the PTA and the Old Boy's Association started working in together for the betterment of the institution. During his time as the Principal he steadily and surely, brought about an attitudinal change in both the students and the staff. And this indeed was no mean achievement!

Fr. Augustine had been the very epitome of warmth, affection and indomitable zeal. The loss of St. Xavier's, Jaipur is St. Xavier's Delhi's gain. An eminent Greek Philosopher once said "There is nothing permanent in this world except change". The process of change that he had initiated, I am sure will continue here with relentless zeal.



*Try to become not a man of success, but try rather to
become a man of value.*

~ Albert Einstein

XII

ST. XAVIER'S SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, DELHI

*We shall pass into the twilight,
Perchance to wake to the dawn of another world
But love shall stay
and his finger-marks shall not be erased.....
Better it is for us, and wiser
To seek a shadowed nook and sleep in our earth divinity
And let love, human and frail, command the coming day.
~ Kahlil Gibran in his book "The Prophet."*

In 1997 July, I was already 57 and wanting to sign off gracefully from active school administration from Jaipur itself after another three years. But then my Provincial thought differently. He wanted me to come to Delhi. I hesitated and made my excuses saying I had only three

more years left to retire from school and it was too short a span of life to start life at a new place; hence I requested him to allow me to stay at Jaipur itself. But he wouldn't agree with me. He pointed out that St. Xavier's, Delhi had remained the same as it used to be in late 60's and 70's without any infrastructural changes. The stones left behind by Fr. Loesch remained untouched, unmoved for many years. More than mere renovations of the campus, the school was in urgent need of a modern auditorium.

After much persuasion I finally complied to come to Delhi in July 1997.

St. Xavier's School, Delhi: A Historical Perspective

It was in 1948 that the first Patna Jesuit Fr. Charles Saldhana reached Delhi and started a Jesuit college named Nirmala College at Kashmere Gate under Delhi University. But, faced with intractable labour problems and various other issues resulting from Delhi's migrant population the Jesuits decided to close down the college in 1953. The rapid increase in Delhi's population following India's independence led to many serious problems and the most important among them was the lack of good schools to educate the children of the new population, even the country's elite and the most powerful. Among the migrants there was a good population of Catholics and Delhi didn't have enough institutions to impart education in a Catholic atmosphere, though the Church was keenly interested in contributing to the development of its people by providing educational assistance to the city. It was in this scenario that the Archbishop of Delhi & Shimla, Most Rev. Joseph Fernandes, wanted a school to be started in the northern part of Delhi by the Jesuits.

Initially the Jesuits were not very keen to take up this new mission, partly due to lack of men and means but largely due to their preoccupation with their mission in Patna. Time and time again the same request was put before the Jesuits who shot down the idea for the same reasons mentioned above. But when the appeals became more and more widespread and when everyone began to press the point, the Jesuits finally decided to give it a serious thought.

After lot of consultations the Jesuits came to the conclusion that there was no other work they could do which would be more helpful to the country at that time than opening a school in Delhi. Negotiations and persuasions continued. Finally in November 1958 Fr. Edward F. Mann, S.J., the then Patna Vice Provincial after having given a careful thought and prayer to the project, as well as after having discussed it with Fr. Frank Loesch, his consultors and other responsible people again and again decided to pay heed to the Archbishop's request. So Fr. E.F. Mann deputed Fr. Frank Loesch to try to acquire some property for the new institution. It was then that Hotel Cecil came up for the consideration of the Jesuits as a possible site for the new school in Delhi. This location was more suitable for their purposes and the Archbishop and the Apostolic Internuncio were very much enthusiastic about the Jesuits purchasing it. Fr. James Tong, S.J. then initiated the negotiations between the Patna Jesuit Society and the Cecil Hotel Management for the transaction of the property. On 31st July, 1959, on the Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Rev. Fr. Charles P. Saldhana, S.J., arrived in Delhi to take charge of the school as its first principal. He was to prepare preliminaries for the opening of the school in January 1960. On 28th

Sept., 1959, Rev. Fr. Francis Loesch, S.J., the former Superior of Patna Mission and long associated with the building and expansion programs of the mission, arrived in Delhi to take over the charge of the new institution as its local Superior. On 1st Nov., 1959 the “Cecil Hotel” ceased to function as a hotel. It was then fully under the ownership of the Jesuits.

On 6th Jan., 1960, His Excellency the most Rev. James R. Knox, the Apostolic Internuncio in India, blessed and officially inaugurated the school building. With his architectural competence Fr. Loesch gave the Hotel building a new shape where the lives of many students were to be moulded. He got it converted into a school and built the Senior as well as the Junior school buildings.

Xavier's, Delhi didn't follow the usual educational pedagogy followed by the then Delhi schools. While most schools in the city were academic oriented, Xavier's began to give a lot of importance to extracurricular activities, especially sports and games. The pioneers were not merely satisfied with imparting the 3-R's, but focused more on character formation and personality development. They encouraged healthy competition among the students in various activities.

Xavier's was started as an 'all Delhi' 'all Boys' school open primarily to the Delhi elite. In a decade after its inception, Xavier's achieved an eminent and enviable position in Delhi's educational skyline - a position that even today Xaverians look back on nostalgically. The school provided the students with excellent facilities, with trained and dedicated staff members. The admission norms for entry into school were of high standard and only the cream of students could make it to

the school. In the early years the students took the Senior Cambridge examination, a tough three year course, which was very challenging for the students as well the teachers. The first batch of students passed out from Xavier's in 1966. In 1977 the school was affiliated to the CBSE and the academic year was shifted from January-December to April-March.

The school which was started as a predominantly boarding school in the old British hotel building, closed down its boarding facilities by 1972 to provide educational facilities to a large number of students from Delhi. Thus it became a true neighbourhood school. The objective was to help the students to use the school facilities even after the school time or on holidays. The parents too found it convenient to come to school any time in order to meet the teachers of their wards- thus there was a better coordination between home and school.

From 1980 Xavier's gave up its elitist culture of being an exclusive school and decided to be an inclusive school. The management realized the fact that it didn't require much effort to make butter out of butter but making butter out of milk was a long and dreary work. Thus, they decided to admit children from the socio-economically weaker sections of the society. 25% of admission is now reserved for the children of economically weaker sections of the neighbourhood. It was a great service rendered to hundreds of children over the past many years, who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to avail of such quality education. The school pursues relentlessly the social thrust it initiated. Now we spend many lakhs of rupees each year in educating students from the disadvantaged sections of society.

For two decades after its inception St. Xavier's was primarily an English medium school. The medium of instruction as well as communication was primarily in English. The school catered to the educational needs of the elite and it maintained its high standard through imparting education in English. During this time English- both written and spoken was emphasized so that our students would be able to compete with other schools.

But by late 70's and early 80's there was a growing awareness among the Jesuits to help the poor by empowering them through education. Hence most of the Jesuit schools began admitting students from lower strata of the society. In order to facilitate the education of the poor students the medium of instruction too had to be in their mother tongue - Hindi. The Jesuit educators also realized that education is imparted best in one's mother tongue which enhances the assimilation of difficult concepts. They argued that in most leading countries in the world (Japan, France, Germany etc) students are taught through their own language rather than in a foreign tongue. Thus from 1980 onwards the medium of instruction was changed to Hindi up to class 5.

But in the context of globalization in the 1990's and the IT boom that started in India, the Jesuit educators gave a re-thinking on the policy regarding the medium of instruction. The utility of English became all the more prominent when India became a destination for global investment. Once again English language became predominantly the global link language for education and business. Hence there arose the need to focus more on learning English. Hence in 2009 the medium of instruction was reverted to English and the new policy was

implemented from the year 2010. Now St. Xavier's is a fully English medium school.

From the academic year 1985-86 Xavier's became co-educational institution. Like any other change this too was resisted firmly from various quarters. But the pioneers were firm on their path breaking decision. According to them co-education is more natural and it teaches better values to the students. The boys learn to respect girls and acquire adaptability early in their life. Growing up together is more natural and they learn to balance their psychological and emotional growth early in their lives. In fact it ensures better discipline in the class rooms as the boys, mostly the culprits of violent behavior, learn to control themselves in front of the girls. There is also an active participation in all the school activities by both the boys and girls. The parents found the policy more convenient as now they could send both their son and daughter to the same school.

By late 90's the world was gripped with Y2K scare. People were unsure what would be condition of the world at the turn of the millennium. Will it survive the turn from 1999 to 2000? Will everything collapse due the Y2K? But I was confident of what Xavier's would achieve in the new millennium. I had a clear vision for our school, despite my earlier inhibitions, as I had stepped on to its campus in July 1997. I was very proud to notice how the female generation had grown in Xavier's, full of confidence and pride and saw the first batch of girls passing out from Xavier's in 1998.

Delhi Old Xaverians Association (DOXA)

The Xaverians don't cut off their relationship with their dear school even after they pass out. Fr. Richard Extross, S.J., had founded XOBAD (Xavier's Old Boys' Association of Delhi) and was its first moderator. In 1998 when the first co-ed batch passed out from school I knew XOBAD was not gender inclusive. The girls having passed out from Xavier's I decided to re-name XOBAD. Suggestions were invited and finally it was re-christened as DOXA (Delhi Old Xaverian's Association). *(Incidentally the Latin word 'Doxa' means 'glory'- the alumni of Xavier's, Delhi, is a glory not only of this institution, but of the whole nation).*

Today, the family of Delhi Old Xaverian's Association (DOXA) is one of the largest alumni groups in India and abroad with more than ten thousand members. It has spread its wings outside of Delhi's Raj Niwas Marg to cover the entire globe with the formation of a Non-Resident Global DOXA Chapter in 2010. Its first chairman is Mr. Yakub Mathew of 1982 batch. NRDOXA has branches in five continents, many nations, and several big cities. A huge network is quickly being built and memories being shared and multiplied. Today they form the cream of society in all continents. The members of DOXA make enormous contribution to the human society all over the world. Some of them have become leading luminaries in the Indian political scenario. While in Delhi during the time when the first BJP government was in power, I remember inviting Mr. Arun Jaitely, an ex-xaverian, who was at that time one of the Union Ministers, to school. He was very pleased to see his alma mater making great strides in Delhi's educational endeavours later years we invited Mr. Ajay Maken, Mr. Sudanshu Mittal and so on

to school for various occasions. These Alumni of Xavier's are very proud to be a part of the school even today.

DOXA Healthcare Foundation

While Doxa over the decades has carried out annually many of the usual activities of any Jesuit alumni association in India, it took many praiseworthy, new initiatives during the last few years. Foremost among them is the Doxa Healthcare Foundation (DHF) which was initiated in April 2013. Through the DHF the alumni of St. Xavier's School, Delhi, reach out to their revered, retired teachers, who, through their years of dedicated and selfless service, built up the personalities of generations of students who are now occupying important positions in the civil society and the nation today. Many of these retired teachers need various types of medical assistance as well as financial help from time to time. DHF today has over twenty eminent professionals who have offered their voluntary services and medical, institutional support to these teachers. The Doxians in India and abroad raised substantial capital to provide the necessary assistance when their teachers face serious financial problems. DHF is a very noble and unique initiative that is worth emulating elsewhere. For, as Aristotle says: "Teachers are to be honoured more than the parents. The latter gives life, but the former teaches the art of living."

English Language Labs:

By this time due to the influence of Hindi medium I found the proficiency of students in communicating in English not sufficient. It was then that I decided to set up a Language Lab in the Senior School. One thing I realized was that at the turn of the Millennium English

language would emerge as an international language of communication due to the impact of globalization. The lab was set up on the ground floor of the Science Block. The main focus of setting up the lab was to let the students learn English in a new way through discussions, by watching documentaries, tele-films, audios and videos. Many other schools visit Xavier's to see the functioning of the lab before setting up one of their own.

Computer Labs:

Fr. Richard Pereria, S.J., along with Bro. Ittoop had taken initiative in introducing computer education in Xavier' Delhi. Initially the lab was set up in the rooms in the second floor office, used by the Coordinators of Academics and Activities. At that time, there were only ten computers. Then this lab was later shifted to the Jesuit Residence with thirty computers. Fr. John Ari made a unique imprint in initiating the process of modernizing Xavier's computer lab by expanding it and adding more computers for the students. I then shifted the Computer Lab from the Jesuit Residence to the present Maths Lab. By this time, we had 50 computers equipped with the latest and modern technology. After the construction of the Millennium Complex, the lab was then shifted to the ground floor of the Complex.

Millennium Changes:

St. Xavier's School has had the distinction of setting a benchmark in progressive and innovative changes. The dawn of the new Millennium saw drastic changes in education at Xavier's, especially in terms of creating new infrastructure. One such change was the construction of the Millennium Complex.

Since its inception Xavier's gave a lot of leeway to the staff in organizing various extra-curricular activities. But due to the lack of a proper auditorium all the major events like Music Fest, Play Fest etc used to be held at Shah Auditorium. It was always very difficult for the staff and students to move out of the school complex and arrange various props for these shows. Sometimes the hall was not available for our use due to other commitments of the auditorium management. The year I joined we had to cancel one of the events due to the non-availability of the hall. Even before my arrival as the Principal I always used to dream about the construction of an auditorium complex for the school, as it was a great need felt by generations of students, their parents and the staff. But now that I became the Principal my desire to go ahead with this idea grew stronger. Of course, I was not the first Jesuit who dreamed about this facility for the school. When Fr. Frank Loesch was the school's Rector, he had planned to build a double storey building in which the ground floor could be used as a hall and the first floor to be used as a chapel. Since there were not enough funds available at that time for the construction of the hall, an appeal was sent to donors. In 1965, Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy donated a substantial amount of money for the purpose, but the construction could not take place immediately and later the fund was used for the regular functioning of the school.

The construction of such a big complex was easier dreamt than done. There used to be a line of buildings that occupied the space between the junior and the Senior School buildings during the Cecil Hotel days. They were called 'Red Fort' in those days. These buildings provided quarters to the Service staff. When Fr. Puthumana was the Principal he

managed to demolish all those old buildings and hence create some open space between the Junior and Senior buildings.

I decided to use this space between the Junior and the Senior School buildings for this purpose, symbolically establishing a link between the two stages in a Xaverian's life. The foundation stone was blessed on 7th September, 1999 by the then Provincial Fr. J. Mannaravelil, S.J.

The construction of this edifice, the dream of every Xaverian, was perhaps the biggest challenge as well as the best achievement in my career as a Jesuit. It was an ambitious project that would cost more than three crores. I knew finding that much fund was more than just a Herculean task in those days. But with the fellow Jesuits on my side, despite some initial resistance, I decided to go ahead, trusting God's Providence. I managed to get all the necessary clearances from the concerned agencies. I appealed to the students, teachers, parents and old students for help and surprisingly there was no dearth of funds at the time when the building was completed and inaugurated on 31st March, 2001 by Justice Mr. K.T. Thomas. God blessed us so abundantly that we even had about rupees one crore left for the further maintenance of the complex during the succeeding years. On the same day itself the building was blessed by most Rev. Anil J. Couto, who is presently the Archbishop of Delhi Archdiocese.

Fr. Lester, S.J. had once mentioned to me that Xavier's had good infrastructure, but no 'Personality' of a leading school. On completion of the Millennium Complex I asked him if he still thought so. He shook his head and said. Now it certainly has a magnificent 'personality'.

The Complex is ultra modern, with facilities and amenities that go even

beyond our four decade dream. Dignified and imaginatively structured, this immaculate building links the Junior School to the Senior School through spacious corridors. The complex consists of a large hall with a spacious stage, balcony, control room and spacious green rooms at the back stage. On the ground floor there are two language labs, two computer labs, a Creativity Centre and a Multimedia Hall. One of the main attractive features of the complex is the garden in front of it.

The Millennium Hall was built with the idea of giving the students a platform to identify and develop their potentials and creative talents. It gave the students a place to practice and perform. One of the most important aspects of the hall is that enough space is provided for various purposes and that makes this hall distinct and unique from any other. It is a multi-purpose hall used not only for cultural events but also for different rehearsals, activities, seminars and various other meetings. It has a huge stage with proper sound and light system. It has a spacious lobby in front and the hall has a capacity to seat 1000 students. The balcony also has a seating capacity of 250 students.

The Millennium Complex- a unique educational endeavour:

When I returned to Xavier's in 2009 as the Rector I was gladdened to find that the construction of the Millennium Complex was a unique educational endeavor. It has brought about sweeping changes in the way the Xaverians groom themselves. The multipurpose Millennium Hall has witnessed the flowering of many a Xaverian talent in music, drama, dance, speech/debates, compeers etc. The academic achievement of a student may not be much to boast about but every Xaverian walks out a well-rounded personality. Already fourteen

batches of students have moved out of the school gaining confidence and courage to face the world.

Like every other Jesuit institution I worked with, at Xavier's, Delhi too, the Jesuit community and the staff work hand in hand fulfilling the divine purpose of nurturing God fearing youngsters who will give back to society manifold. They grow up within the sacred precincts of Xavier's, turning into young men and women of character and faith. These cherished qualities have permeated into society at large through our students. Christ lives and thrives at Xavier's through these innocent and vibrant youngsters. The very fibre of education at Xavier's drives students not just to learn and acquire knowledge but imbues them with a passion for excellence, the courage to question, the confidence that comes with discernment and sensitivity to the plight of the less privileged.

My four years at Xavier's Delhi as its Principal thus proved to be the most eventful fulfilling and successful years of my career. I succeeded in accomplishing the most challenging job of completing the Millennium Complex and dedicated the same to the staff and students of Xavier's. By this time my health too was not looking that good. I underwent four angioplasties during this period and faced many tragedies in my family. But I had a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishments, as I had brought enormous transformation in St. Xavier's, school, Delhi during the short span of four years. Philosophically I said to myself the immortal words of the French-born Quaker Stephen Grellet (died in 1885) who said:

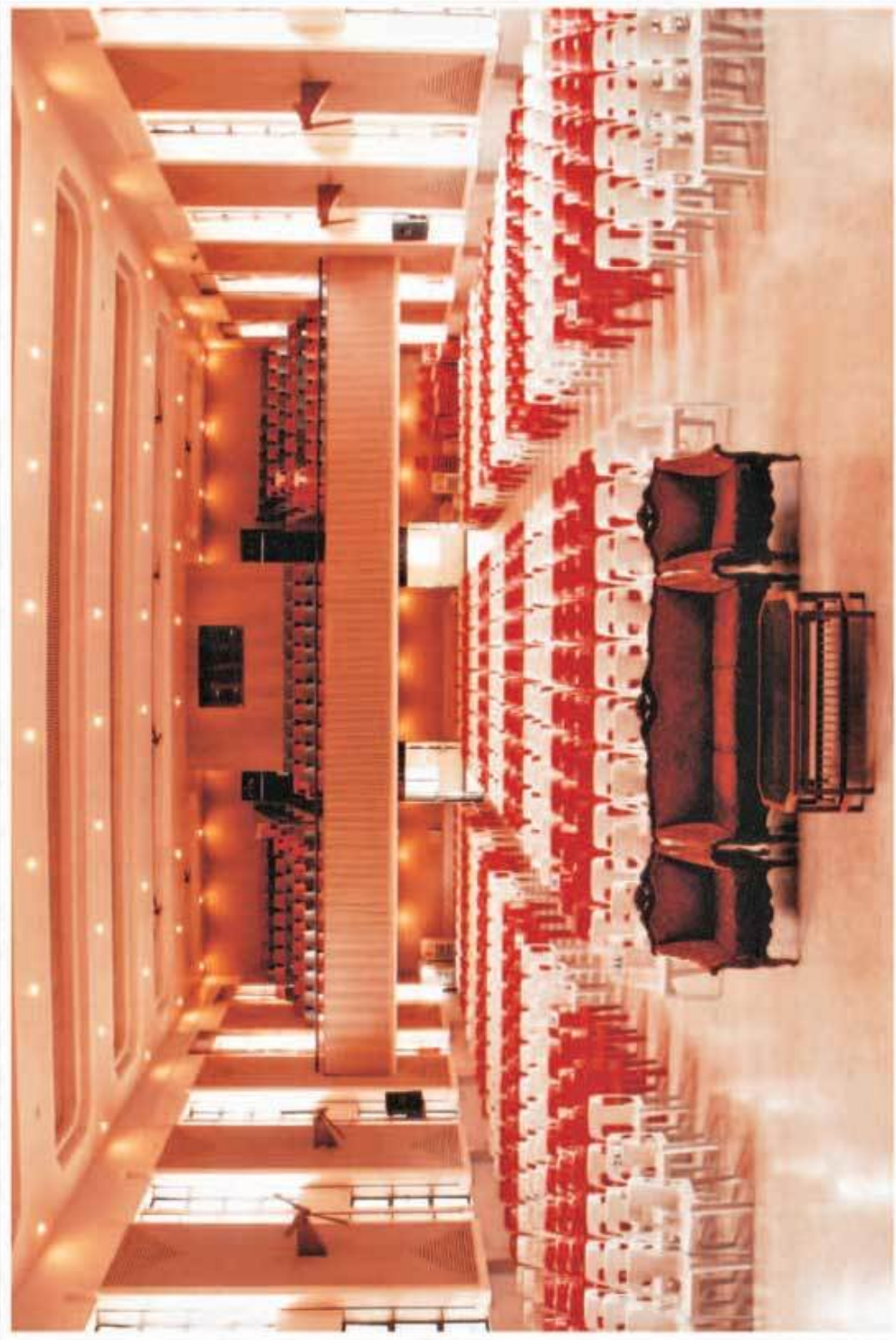
"I shall pass through this world but once.
Any good, therefore, that I can do,
Or any kindness that I can show to any human being,
Let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it,
For I shall not pass this way again"

One of my fellow Jesuits, Fr. Glenn Menezes, S.J., who was the then the Director of Media, St. Xavier's School summed up the feelings and sentiments of all in a brochure he brought out on the occasion of the inauguration of the Millennium Complex, on 31st March 2001:

"This wonderful gift is a labour of love by Fr. P.T. Augustine, S.J., our Principal. It became possible due to his incredible ability of making dreams come true. He combines in himself a vision of the future and a passion for excellence. He has worked relentlessly, revising plans, raising funds, obtaining the best, supervising personally every simple phase of construction. Dreaming, imagining, sparing no effort, he has achieved what once was impossible. He has been supported by the Jesuit Community and a large number of the other people, to whom the present and the future generations of students will ever be indebted."



*Perfection is attained by slow degrees;
it requires the hand of time.
~ Voltaire*



Millennium Hall, St. Xavier's, Delhi



St. Xavier's, Delhi



Senior School, St. Xavier's, Delhi



Junior School, St. Xavier's, Delhi

XIII

MESSAGES OF APPRECIATION

*Life is mostly froth and bubble
Two things stand like stone:
Kindness in another's trouble
Courage in your own
~ Adam Lindsay Gordon*

A Man with a vision for the Future and a Passion for Excellence

By

Mrs. Neera Verma,

Former HOD, ENGLISH & COORDINATOR OF ACTIVITIES

St. Xavier's School, Delhi

Fr. P.T. Augustine shares an unusual trait with Leonardo Da Vinci – that of day dreaming. “I do most work when I am doing nothing”. Fr. Augustine says, just as Da Vinci tried to tell people that an artist when he seems to be doing least is at his creative best.



What are Fr. Augustine's day dreams made of? In all likelihood they are about catalyzing and channeling the human potential at his command, about expansion and modernization of the infra-structural facilities of his school for the benefit of its students, about reforms in pedagogy in this age of accelerating changes and progress in science and technology,... in short about the unforeseen and the unthinkable and the undreamable.

As an educationist he towers above his contemporaries. His colleagues and friends describe him thus: "A trail blazer with a passion for excellence, meticulous organizer, and excellent administrator, a designer of friendly spaces with a touch of class, and above all a man with a generous heart blended with a human touch."

In an interview to the Xavier Times, Fr. Augustine answering a question about his attitude towards life and work said, "I want that all of us ever strive hard to achieve excellence in whatever we do, even in small things. Secondly, we must have a vision, a dream, a goal in our life. Thirdly, we take appropriate action in order to achieve our goal, to convert our dreams and visions into reality and find new creative ways of doing things. That is also a part of the search for excellence."

An integral part of this quest for excellence is creating new approaches to life's myriad possibilities. As a Jesuit –educator a new dimension is added which is "to be an instrument of reconciliation among people. It is of immense importance to gather people together, work together for a common goal." Fr. Augustine says, "My job has been gathering people together for development and growth through education. This involves a vision for the future and a passion for the ongoing realization of that vision. I believe that education is the most effective single factor for

development and progress, as well as for equalization of opportunity for all classes of people. Fr. Augustine thus is superbly equipped to fulfill the destiny of schools.

Fr. Augustine realizes his vision for the future by being constantly innovative and creative. This creativity is manifest in enhancement of the infrastructural facilities in the institutions under his care, in people management, in personal and professional development of the staff and most importantly in human relationships.

As a warm and concerned person he has touched the life of many in several ways. People find him generous and compassionate. He identifies the needs of people and mobilizes his resources to fulfill them – the need may be of any kind. His leadership comes to the fore in getting the best out of his team. He easily secures loyalty and devotion. He has been described as “a builder of people, architect of changes and a visionary leader”. He is a man of initiative and drive and has the confidence to undertake ambitious projects. “Being in the administrative role gives me a tremendous scope to reach out to more and more people – students, teachers, parents and to people at large and to be of service in many ways – especially to those who need my help most,” he says.

Fr. Augustine's favourite reading is biography – especially of achievers in every field, who challenged themselves and overcame apparently insurmountable obstacles. Great achievers have influenced him. Fr. Augustine feels, “One of the biggest problems that people will have to face in the coming years will be the challenge of change – change which will be so overwhelming that unless we change ourselves, we will be swept away. So we must remain in the habit of change”. This mindset

keeps him young, for youth is not a time of life – it is a state of mind. It is a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, vigor of emotions; it is freshness of the deep springs of life.

To Fr. Augustine perhaps one of the most precious phases of his life is his close association with Mother Teresa. In the early 80's he met her frequently and assisted her in her work at Jaipur. Meeting her in March 1981, not much after she received Nobel Peace Prize and the Bharat Ratna, he says, "I was struck by her humility, gentleness and concern, I found that one cannot but be transformed in her presence. As I shook hands with her, I could feel a current of divine power passing from her into my own being. It was certainly a very extraordinary and inexplicable experience".

A man of extraordinary foresight and vision, a man with a passion for excellence and for the extraordinary, a man possessing stamina and courage of conviction, a man with an incessant supply of revolutionary ideas, a leader with a deep insight into people's minds – for all those who have known him, Fr. P.T. Augustine is all these and much more.

The Millennium Hall, A Millennium Gift to Xavier's, Delhi

By

Uma Tangri & Sudha Puri,

Former Teachers,

St. Xavier's School, Delhi



It was a cloudy morning of the month of July, the first day of school after the summer vacations. I noticed the children were more excited than usual. They were talking to each other with wonder as they lined up alongside the wired enclosure looking at the dug up ground, where they had their open-air stage just before they had left for their vacations.

I saw Father Augustine standing by the wired barricade welcoming the students to school, smiling and not telling the students to move on. It was as if he wanted them all to have a good look at what was happening in the school and gaze at it in wonder taking their own sweet time.

I went up to him and said: "At last Father! It was high time our children had a proper auditorium for their activities!"

He laughed and said, "Right now all you can see is chaos and destruction!"

I replied: "But something beautiful and useful is going to come out of it Father, like a phoenix bird! If you are really planning to build an auditorium, then that is definitely the need of the hour!"

He laughed and we went inside the Junior School building, to begin the first term activities of the year. Soon there were announcements for children to stay away from the dug up areas and stay on the field during the break time. Children stayed as far away from the wired boundary. But some curious kids would go and eat their lunch standing next to the

wired enclosure watching the ongoing construction works. Soon Father called a meeting of the entire school staff and discussed the details of his plan for making a multipurpose hall for the students. It would not only have a stage for functions of the school but language labs, computer labs and a multi-media lab as well.

He discussed his plans with us and shared his apprehensions about the problems to be overcome for this dream project to materialize – the major one being the estimated cost.

Mrs. Tangri, my elder sister was also present in the meeting. She was the one person who was very fond of taking active part in any activity started by the Jesuits in the school. She discussed with me in her typical excited way of talking, "What can we do to help Father?" I told her in the most matter of fact way, "Give him the funds required for the project and he will do the rest."

"But how can we collect two crores! It's impossible!" she said.

"Nothing is impossible!" I said wanting to carry on the conversation, as I love to say it, in response to the word 'impossible'.

Days passed by and we could often see Father going to the Senior School, walking briskly but deep in thought. Sometimes he would wish us back with a smile but seemed oblivious of all the hustle-bustle around. Didi and I would look at him and then at each other and repeat, "What can we do to help him?"

Soon the building started coming up and the need for funds for various materials for the Hall started mounting. Father held another meeting of the staff apprising them of the latest developments and asking for suggestions about how to collect the required funds for the building. Everybody volunteered to give three day's salary for the good cause.

Even then the total amount collected was like a drop in the ocean.

Soon the days turned into weeks and weeks into months and the work of the Auditorium which had started at such a fast pace slowed down and at a point in time to a standstill. It was then that we realized the gravity of the situation and wondered what could be done!

I remember the day of the staff picnic that year. Didi and I were sitting together in the bus that was taking us to Suraj Kund. At a red light, I saw a small temple being built by the roadside and thought to myself, 'If people can donate to build a temple why can't they donate to build an auditorium which would affect the future of generations of students and build up great personalities, which in turn would create smart and capable citizens of our country.

Suddenly it struck me that if we made people aware of what we were planning to do and its benefits to the thousands of students studying presently and in future, they would understand and would help in whichever way they could. I discussed it with Didi and she at once started planning how to go about it!

We contacted Father and decided to first involve all NRI ex-students who were highly placed and doing very well abroad. We decided to write to them and tell them about our project. Father worked hard to find out their addresses and wrote a detailed letter explaining about the project to them and posted many letters but we did not get any response from them. We were very disappointed, but Father didn't show his disappointment. However, he agreed though a little reluctantly, to approach the students of all the classes and their parents for their help and cooperation.

This is where the role of the entire staff came in. They talked to the students about this project and asked them to tell their parents about it. That also did not work well because we were not sure what the students communicated to the parents and what the parents understood as nobody came forward to help and the building stood as it was! It was then that we thought of meeting the parents in a more personalized manner i.e. in smaller groups.

We began by contacting the rich business class followed by well placed professionals and parents at such positions where they could guide and help us about our future course of action. We invited them to visit the school and see the progress of the building. We organized meetings with them in the senior school hall from where they could have a good look at the new building coming up. They saw for themselves the possibility of great many opportunities of growth and development of their children with the completion of this project.

The meetings were meticulously planned and Father saw to each and every minute detail which included the number of parents to be called, the issues to be discussed and their order, the list of actual things required for the incomplete building, the choice of various ways the parents could help etc.

Father suggested we speak to small groups of people so that we could interact at a personal level in a more meaningful manner. The parents were contacted much in advance and briefed about the meeting. We also took the help of a parent Mrs. Gupta to conduct these meetings.

I remember while I would introduce the main purpose of the meeting to a group of about twenty to twenty five parents, Father would explain the details of the plans of the entire project and the expected benefits to our

students for all times to come. Mrs. Tangri would tell them the various ways in which they could help through their contacts or resources to get the work started in full swing and Mrs. Gupta would talk to them as a fellow parent and suggest they could even help in kind by arranging for the materials to be used in the building.

It took some time for our requests to sink in but slowly and gradually the parents became a part of this project which seemed to grow very naturally yet phenomenally and before we knew it the parents of the middle class families and even the underprivileged sections wanted to take part in this project and help in whichever way they could.

Whether it was Father's quiet courage of taking on this huge project single handedly or his personality of reaching out and making a place in everybody's heart by his simple straight talk, we do not know but nearly everyone wanted to share his dream and do his bit.

We were overawed at the whole hearted response of the parents, students and well wishers of St. Xavier's school Delhi! The students did their bit by organizing a cultural program to collect funds for the hall. It was a great evening where we all sat through the musical program like a family working hard for the common aim of progress and development of our children, our students.

The teachers spoke to the parents during the parent-teacher meetings and before we knew it each and every person attached to the school was feeling as if the building of an auditorium for the students was his own private project and responsibility.

It was as if it were God's own project and He saw to its completion through a thousand hands. Father was not alone anymore!

On the day of its inauguration, Father assured the laborer who had mentioned, that he had worked so hard to make the building and on its completion nobody would even let him enter it, that the school was committed to give education to the children of the underprivileged sections of the society and he would do all he could to help their children through education.

It is my assumption that this very practical work of the school was another one of Father's spiritual endeavors and working for him and with him was...yes! It was a great spiritual experience!

Fr. P.T. Augustine - A People's Person:

Mrs. Maria James

Coordinator, Prep-Department

Most important than learning an inheritance is leaving a legacy. If God ever created a perfect people, person it is Fr. P.T. Augustine. His genuine charisma exceeds warmth and a caring personality. Fr.'s mere entrance into a room, draws people to attention, executes them to respond with enthusiasm. In this day of charismatic leaders. Fr. Augustine stands as a rock of integrity. There is no guile or duplicity in his life and whatever path he directs others to take we have personally observed he was already walked that path himself.

When special people touch our lives then suddenly we see how beautiful and wonderful our world can really be. Fr. Augustine has been an exceptionally special person who has shown us that our special hopes and dreams can take us far by looking inward and believing who we are. He has blessed us with the utmost joy and have that his generous heart could give without counting the cost, a true Jesuit priest faithful and committed to his calling and vocation.

One of our great personal joys is to see Fr. Augustine's exceptional skills of excellence in whatever area of work he has undertaken just to name a few the Millennium Hall, Hall of Honour, ICT Lab etc. and the list is endless. It is his behind the scenes sincerity that impress us most and is one of those rare unique personalities that continues challenge with accountability.

In the end I would like to say this with deep gratitude about Fr. P.T. Augustine which aptly sums up his contribution to us and the world

leaving a legacy is an untouchably difficult challenge. You pay a high price to live for people other than yourself. But it is worth it. A legacy is a dream that not only changes your life but also the lives of all the people it touches.



*The secret of joy in work is contained in one word –
excellence. To know how to do something well is to enjoy it.*

~ Pearl S. Buck

XIV

NEPAL CALLING... MY KATHMANDU DAYS

*Some defeats are more triumphant than victories.
What is the use of health, or of life,
if not to do some work therewith?*

~ Thomas Carlyle

1997 to 2001 may have been the fastest of pace of my life's race and I really needed some rest. Though my spirit was willing, but not my body. By this time my health began to decline.

But for an active Jesuit rest and relaxation is very difficult to come. I was really surprised when I was invited to Kathmandu to take over as Principal of St. Xavier's College. I forgot about my health problems and readily agreed to go to Kathmandu.

The Competent Never Lack Opportunities:

St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu was by and large a Junior College. The College is situated right in the heart of the city next to the Parliament, the Supreme Court and the Army Headquarters. All these institutions are only 5 to 7 minutes walk from the College. Even the Royal Palace is just three kilometers away from the College. Hence the security arrangement is very good in this area. The students who attend St. Xavier's College come from good educational background. So they are very serious about their studies and generally don't indulge in wasteful activities. They are very simple, law abiding students who readily respond to instructions. The College had only one Bachelor's Degree program, i.e. BSW. The total number of students in the college at that time was 492.

The College had excellent buildings but I found that quite bit of space was not fully utilized. There was no economized use of land and infrastructure in the College. May be this was due to lack of experienced Principals.

One of the first things I decided to do was to make use of the facilities and introduce number of new B.A. Degree programs that were in great demand. After the Intermediate course the students could opt from a number of BA programs for their Bachelor's Degree or even the students from the other Junior Colleges could join Xavier's for these new programs.

I began my consultations with the University authorities and I found that starting a new Department was as difficult as starting a new College. I found out the courses that had the best demand in the job market and initiated four Bachelor's Degree programs and two Master's

Degree Programs. I had to look for the necessary staff to teach these courses. There was one course BIM for which I received the best recommendations from the university but to my greatest surprise the man who encouraged me to start this course told me at the time of giving me the necessary permission that it was a dying course. But I was not disappointed. I decided to prove him wrong. To everyone's surprise it became very popular and even today it is the one which is sought after by many students. Each year the college gets at least 250 applications for just 50 seats!

I was not sure I would be able to do too many things in Kathmandu. I had already four angioplasties but by God's grace everything went well with me and I was able to fulfill all my responsibilities properly.

Leaving My Footprints...

Today I feel very grateful to Nepal Jesuit Region and its then Superior for giving this opportunity to serve St. xavier's College, Kathmandu, as it offered me plenty of scope for my new spirit of initiatives, creativity and innovative spirit for the benefit of the people of Nepal. Some of my new initiatives in St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu, are listed below:

Academic Matters

From time to time during my tenure, I gave detailed reports on the works of the College to the Education Commission of the Nepal Jesuit Society and Management Committee. Both of these bodies were extremely pleased with the development of the College so far and with what had been planned for the future. Let me briefly highlight some important points:

(a) The student enrollment in the College increased from 492 in the year 2001 to 2100 by the year 2007, an enormous increase of over 428 per cent. Similarly the number of staff also increased, though not proportionately.

(b) There was only one full-fledged, Bachelor's degree program in 2001. When I left we had four bachelor's degree programs and two Master's degree programs. BSW, BBS, BIM, B.Sc. MBS, and M.S.W. In 2006 we applied to Tribhuvan University for permission to start two more degree programs: B.Sc, and M.Sc. in Microbiology. In academic matters as well as the total formation of students, we ensured that quality kept pace with the increased enrollment. Undoubtedly this was a great struggle on the part of the staff, and involved careful planning and many sacrifices. During my tenure the College undoubtedly grew in

reputation, a fact that was acknowledged by the academic institutions in the country as well as the general public.

Infrastructural Facilities

The development of the infrastructural facilities of the College during my tenure had been phenomenal: the interior work of the hall in order to make the hall functional and attractive in spite of its structural deficiencies, the lawns and gardens, parks and the greenery, the friendly and welcoming atmosphere created in the entire campus for the benefit of all, especially the students and the staff, the tube well and the filtration plant, both together providing an abundant supply of good water for the growing number of students and for the entire campus and even the Jesuit Residence, an electricity transformer that assures sufficient supply of electricity for the increasing need of the computer labs, auditorium, etc., the new basketball court, the additional space for movement of the increasing number of students, a parking lot for approximately 225 motorbikes, three excellent computer labs with a total of approximately 155 computers, and an additional 30 computers in various offices and departments – all with 24-hour internet facilities, a state-of-the-art multimedia lab, many of the renovated and modernized classrooms, classroom furniture for the increased number of students, the computerization of the office and accounts section, the optimum utilization of the grounds and classrooms and other facilities, the construction of the Watrin Memorial Building, the magnificent rooftop canteen with its panoramic view of the city as well as the Himalayan mountains, the additional space and facilities for various indoor games..... The items do not exhaust here. With all these changes and developments, the college underwent a huge transformation.

The Staff:

With the increased number of departments and students, we recruited adequate number of qualified and dedicated staff, who soon assimilated the Xaverian culture and traditions. In the category of the teaching staff in 2006, 70 were full-timers, 34 part-timers. Seventeen of the teaching Staff were Ph.D. holders in their respective subjects. Every year at least half a dozen teachers go for their Ph. D. work, and some of them do return to the College after their higher studies. Besides the teaching staff, we had twenty staff for the office, laboratories and library, and eighteen for the maintenance services. It is the staff that makes the College what it is today. The staff was with me in every enterprise I initiated; they were with me with loyalty, dedication and commitment. They followed me not because of any extraordinary leadership qualities that I possess but because I walked with them, as a companion, friend, co-worker and a trail blazer.

Financial Matters

As the Audit Report has testified year after year since 2002, the College was in excellent financial condition. It was, in fact, in the best position among the Jesuit institutions in Nepal, and was in a position to help other institutions, as well as to develop the College still further. As the College needed additional land and buildings in order to qualify itself for getting Deemed University status, we raised adequate funds in the College to meet these needs. This is in spite of the fact that we spent large sums of money for development works of the College for the six years I was the Principal. We invested huge sums of money not only for development of infrastructural and technological facilities, but also for the proper recruitment and development of the staff and their welfare.

The College invested money judiciously for developmental projects, and these in return generated more funds for future development, modernization and updating.

Spirit of Collaboration and Partnership

During my tenure, three nuns of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity were collaborating with us in the College. Their services were very commendable. For the last thirty years or more, the Society of Jesus has been insisting on lay collaboration. It is not merely sharing of responsibility, but sharing of authority as well. The Society today insists on not only collaboration but a spirit of partnership. This approach is perfectly appropriate, not because of the dwindling number of Jesuits and the decreasing professional quality of our Jesuit personnel, but precisely because at least ninety five per cent of the works of our institutions are done by our lay staff.

Build on the Strength of the Staff

All of us have our own share of strengths and weaknesses. As the institutional leader, I have always tried to emphasize and develop the strengths of our staff, at times overlooking their defects and failures. Our staff is our most valuable resource. My aim as Principal has always been to get the best from them for the benefit of the College, to achieve the goals of the institution through our Staff. I believe that our staff, with varying talents, experiences and motivations, is to be trusted and respected, unless they prove themselves to be unworthy of such trust and respect. If we don't trust and respect them, we cannot expect them to trust and respect the management and administration. In more than one large Jesuit institution, I have been instrumental in re-establishing cordial relationship and mutual trust between the lay staff and the

Jesuit Management, after a painful period of mutual mistrust.

Delegation of Authority with appropriate Accountability

As the College grew in strength during my tenure I delegated more and more authority to the staff, especially the Deans, Heads of Departments, and the Campus Supervisor. This made them responsible for much of the student affairs, including discipline in general but more especially absenteeism, late arrival and early departure. There was more delegation and sharing of responsibility and authority. In major matters like academics or student discipline we met together and decided the course of action. I was able to maintain good rapport with students and staff of all departments. My guiding principle in dealing with the students was to train the youngsters in the responsible use of freedom. I tried to disseminate this principle to the staff and instruct them to always remember 'to handle with care', blending strictness with kindness.

Partnership in Education (PIE)

I started a new initiative in Kathmandu called Partnership in Education. It was the College's outreach program for the benefit of the academically and financially less privileged students of six government schools in the neighbourhood by making use of the College's many facilities.

The objectives of the program were (a) to improve the academic standard of the students in the government schools; (b) to facilitate personality development of the students.

The target group consisted of students of classes 8, 9, and 10. We worked in collaboration with the principals and teachers of the six partner schools. The Coordinator of the program was in frequent

contact with the schools concerned, and when necessary, with the parents as well. We had a total of 320 students. They used to come to the College at 6.30 a.m., had regular classes in English, Science and Maths, and at 8.30 a.m. went to their schools, where classes were not very regular and facilities were poor. The College had appointed qualified teachers to take these classes. On Saturdays we involved the students in co-curricular activities: games and sports, dance and music, art and craft, elocution and dramatics. Student and teacher volunteers from various Departments of the College guided and directed the PIE students in these activities. This ensured the participation of the entire College in the PIE program. There was frequent interaction between the College and the partner schools, and also regular evaluation and monitoring of the program. By God's grace the program is still running successfully.

Child Rights Resource Centre

In collaboration with *Save the Children Sweden and Norway*, we established in the College a Child Rights Education Resource Centre. The first of its kind in South Asia, the Centre was inaugurated by the UGC Vice Chairman of India in June 2005 in the presence of many distinguished academicians from the South Asian region. The Centre had a good collection of books, periodicals, CDs, etc., on child rights, and thanks to the many INGOs, the Centre was regularly supplied with all such materials published elsewhere in the world. Anyone interested in studies/research on child rights issues could avail of the facilities of the Centre free of charges.

Master's in Social Work (MSW) and in Business Studies (MBS)

Soon after my arrival, we established in the College MSW and MBS, the former being the first of its kind in the whole of Nepal. Our Social Work Department inspired, helped and guided two universities in Nepal to establish Bachelor's degree programs in Social Work. The Department of Social Work also planned two short term diploma courses – one on Child Rights, and the other on NGO Management.

Community Service to be an Essential Component of the College Life:

Since June 2005 we made it compulsory that all students admitted to the College do a minimum of 20 hours of social service during the academic year. Getting involved in social service means that the students prepare themselves and use their learning to contribute to the building up of the community. Students were sent to various social service organizations to work. Based on their personal interests, students were assigned to different organizations working on issues like community development, empowerment of women, child rights, physical and mental disabilities, protection of the elderly and the disabled, environmental issues, etc. On completion of 20 hours of work, the students went through an evaluation, submit a report on the work they did and the lessons they learned in the process. Students then get a certificate of completion.

Mentoring:

In August 2005 the College started a systematic mentoring program. As a first step, the program included mentoring 392 first year students by 26 teachers. Before the beginning of the program, the teachers were given an orientation on the aims, methods, structures and outcome of the mentoring program. 14 students were assigned to each teacher, who

would guide and assist them in their personal and academic growth, and also keep a record of the growth and development of each student.

Training of Teachers in Counseling:

During the second half of the year 2005, the Counseling Department of the College conducted a four-months long, 100 hours, counseling training program for teachers of schools and colleges in Kathmandu. 42 teachers completed this course.

Preparation for Obtaining University Status:

During the time I was the Principal we fulfilled almost all the requirements for obtaining a University status for the College, as per the norms and criteria stipulated in the Higher Education Bill presented in the Parliament in 2002. Before the Bill was passed, the Parliament was dissolved. Then we waited for the political stability and better times to proceed with our plans for a Xavier University in Kathmandu. The necessary plot of land was identified and adequate funds were raised for the purchase of the same. Additional funds were assured for the construction of the University buildings. But the political situation was still very unstable in 2007 when I decided to return to Delhi. As one of the Nepal Jesuits, Fr. Paul Chemparathy, S.J. recently remarked: "If Fr. Augustine had stayed on as Principal of St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu, there certainly would have been a Xavier University in Kathmandu by now."

In a letter dated 1st July, 2007, addressed to the Jesuits of Nepal Jesuit Region I wrote the following words, expressing my feelings and sentiments when I returned from Kathmandu to Delhi:

"As I relinquish my office after six years of stewardship of this College, I

thought of writing down some facts and comments on various developments in the College during the last six years, my style of administration and people management, my visions and dreams for this College. I am extremely grateful to the Nepal Jesuit Society and to all my Jesuit Companions, to the Management Committee, to the students and staff for their support, co-operation and encouragement, for their affection and love. My greatest achievement during one of the most turbulent transitional period of Nepal is that I, along with the College, have survived. I knew that in order to survive, it is not enough to be on the right track, but we must keep moving in this world that is being globalized and “flattened” in an ever accelerating speed”.



*They say that nobody is perfect. Then they tell you
practice makes perfect. I wish they'd make up their
minds.*

~ Winston Churchill



St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu, Nepal



St. Xavier's College Auditorium, Kathmandu



*St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu,
celebrating Silver Jubilee on December 3rd 2013*



With colleagues Nirmal K. Shrestha and Murali Sharma



St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu



With Graduating students of BBS in 2004



XV

MESSAGES OF APPRECIATION

*Only two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity,
and I'm not sure about the former.*

~ Albert Einstein

A Great Man's Story:

Recalling Fr. P.T. Augustine at St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu, Nepal

By

Murali Sharma

Campus Supervisor/ Controller of Examination

St. Xavier's College, Nepal



A boy comes to the college gate for the first time and finds a man standing at the corner of the gate and asks the whereabouts of the principal. He returns with a naïve answer of the man: "You can meet him tomorrow at 10 a.m." And the next day the boy is surprised by the

simplicity unveiled when he finds the same person at the gate yesterday is sitting today on the chair of the Principal. What can be a greater teaching of simplicity than this to the teenagers?

This is one among many stories of Fr. P. T. Augustine S.J., who was the principal of St. Xavier's College, Maitighar from 2001 to 2007. I always like to call him a teacher who doesn't carry the narrow 'content following textbooks' to the classroom but rather performs the syllabus of life out there in the classroom of life itself.

The memory of one is often associated to the good things one does during one's tenure while painful experiences are intentionally overshadowed. Enlisting Fr. Augustine's good deeds in the College certainly fills the pages but recalling the moment of his bad temper made me to ponder for weeks. I recall two instances of his anger which I think may surprisingly be interesting to the readers who know him. During his tenure, he just had two instances of outbursts at me and this is what reminds me of him being someone 'normal' in our terms. It is hardly possible for a person to be so kind to everyone when that everyone is put on his/her shoulder to be carried for at least a couple of years. But he was an exception. Relating this instance of anger to my best times with him during 'Nepal Banda' or any other unprecedented days, he would always bring a 'mini picnic' for two of us to the College and rest his inspiring journey up to the date in nostalgic words. One day, in the afternoon, when he found a worker absent from his duty, he angrily asked me to let the man know that he was fired from his job. Sandwiched between the Principal's order and the poor man's pathetic situation, I tried to be kind to the man and disobeyed the principal. Next day, he shouted at me but that very ironically satisfied me. This, as I

think, is a human nature that man can't tolerate someone being too furious, and at the same time can't stand anyone being too kind to him/her. I was suffocated by the simplicity and benevolence of this man and his outburst brought a gust of fresh air in my lungs.

Second time when he got angry with me was the day of Father Watrin's demise. With a saddened heart, he forced me to prepare five photo frames for the funeral by the next morning. I had had just a night to do it and hopelessly I informed him that I wouldn't be able to do that. He didn't listen to anything that evening leaving me no option but to complete the task given. Next day, I was consoled when he concluded the instance with a lesson on the need of 'transcending limitations'. Yes, indeed, we can do things more than we normally believe possible.

Every memorable event related to him can be derived with a message for life. Surprising to today's administrators, he would never ask people wandering around to get to '24 hours work-scheduled life'. One day I complained against the staff watching television in cafeteria and office, and the students relaxing on the lawn. He turned back and asked me, "Why are you bothered at their relief? Have they been to classes during study time?" "Yes" I nodded. "Then, let them take a break in rest. Rest for creativity! Rest to energize themselves!". He always longed to be with his teachers and students during the break. He loved people so he was loved back. I still remember the hungry crowd of the students listening to his inspiring speech in functions. I remember them competing to talk to him on off days. Now I realize it to be the best way of running administration. Rule by threat lasts for a short time but rule with care lasts forever. He knew how to take the best out of everyone and followed the same in his life too.

People used to call his hands the hands of Demeter that would fill life even in deserts. Anything he touched would bloom. I found him very good at horticulture. The lawn of the College, which was made during his tenure, reminds me of him these days. He used to spend hours in nurseries matching and searching for appropriate flowers for the college. He had a very common hobby of keeping himself updated with almost every fashion of his kind in the market. So it didn't surprise me any day finding him in the malls. Beside, he regularly used to take a nap during break time. His administration was a bit more poetic and more effective than that of any normal administrators. The way he loved the human resources helped him a lot to be a part of everyone in the College. The evidence is the report that he prepared before he left the College that consisted of two poems. And to our surprise one was written by himself. He called me one day and said, "Anything on the campus which is not used for one year or more should be removed forever." I still can't understand what he actually meant. Was that a literal saying or was he rhetorically suggesting to use everything in the College premises? I wonder. He designed the Watrin Hall at College that has been serving more than three thousand students every year. He was a Renaissance-man-type-of-person who excelled in many sectors specially the academia and the administration.

If forgotten for other things, Father Augustine will not be forgotten for the academic endeavor he undertook during his tenure. He initiated a PIE (Partnership in Education) project that opened the gate of the College to those disadvantaged children from the government schools who really were deprived of quality education. This sacred thought of contributing to the commoners with quality education didn't only help

the children learn from the social work students of the College, but also helped impart a message to the youngsters about the importance of social service. Personally, I interpret this project as a step to minimize the gap between the rich students and the poor by bringing them together in the same classroom where the college students teach the primary level students caring for them as their younger brothers and sisters. It has been in practice ever since and will remain in practice in future too reminding us of Father Augustine.

Personally, I will never forget the trip to Lhasa we made before bidding adieu to him from the College. I could clearly read on his face the grief of leaving the place he had stayed for six years and the lawn he spread himself in front of the College. However, he was trying to veil it with a trip to Lhasa that actually helped him to some extent. He seemed to be carefree during that trip. He entered Lhasa bazaar and dipped himself in the hot spring on our way back at Barabishe/Tattopani. That must have been a day of meditation for him; a day of his own, as if throughout that trip it were a rest day at the end of God's Creation Project. I felt that way.

This piece of reminiscence must be taken as an innocent adventure of mine to draw a sketch of a person whose dimension is beyond my gaze. A person has to have something special to impart to the people or place around like the fragrance of flowers. One should at least make others remember him/her with the words of praise one way or the other. He bloomed like flower in the College and left the fragrant air we breathe these days in the cafeteria, in the lawn or the stage of the Watrin Hall. When someone speaks on Watrin stage, I feel Father is providing his shoulders to the man to be noticed by the audience. When the students

read books in the library, I imagine these magnificent kids sitting on his lap with full assurance of their future. No doubt this College is made by the contribution of many people, but he is the one who stands with the mark of his presence among other people in the crowd. I envy him being talked about by the students and the staff who have never seen him personally in their life. He has become a person to be talked about and I believe he will remain so forever. My understanding of his success is his simplicity and his humanitarian attitude.



*Persistence. Perfection. Patience. Power. Prioritize your
passion. It keeps you sane.*

~ Criss Jami

XVI

BACK IN DELHI HIGHER EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS New Visions and Dreams

*If you refuse to accept anything
but the best, you often get it.
Life gives what you ask of it.
~ Somerset Maugham*

Back from Kathmandu in July 2007, I had a few special assignments waiting for me in Delhi. The foremost among them related to the possibility as well as the desirability of the Delhi Jesuits entering into the field of higher education. In December 2006 in the Delhi Jesuit Province Assembly I had proposed that we must take the necessary steps to enter into the higher educational field, and it was unanimously accepted by the Province.

Jesuits had entered the field of higher education in Delhi as early as in 1948. At the request of the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, four American Jesuits of Missouri Province, came from the United States and established in Delhi what was then known as Nirmala College, with Fr. Charles Saldanha as its Principal. The College was located at Kashmere Gate area first, and then shifted to Delhi Gate area. The Government of India allocated to the Nirmala College a large plot of land in the Delhi University area. The present Kirorimal College is situated on this plot. The Nirmala College had a short life span. It was closed down by the Jesuits as they faced many insurmountable problems, including serious interference of various trade unions.

This later date came only about four decades later, in December 2006. The proposal came soon after the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) report was accepted by the Government of India. The NKC had pointed out that for sustainable development of any country a minimum of 25 per cent of the eligible youth – those between the age group of 18 to 24 – should have accessibility to higher education. With 318 universities in the country in the year 2006, India had higher educational facilities for only 9.5 per cent of the eligible age group - far behind this minimum. Accepting the recommendation, the Government of India appealed to the private sector to enter into the higher educational field in a big way. Considering this context, I pleaded in the Delhi Jesuit Province Assembly of December 2006 that the Delhi Jesuits must make their own contribution to the sustainable development of our country. Though in principle the Delhi Jesuit Province accepted this proposal unanimously, no follow-up action had been taken for the next six months on account of lack of experienced personnel. Since I had some experience in the higher educational field,

I was appointed Chairman of the Higher Education Committee that was appointed to make first a feasibility study and then proceed with plans to enter into higher education in the National Capital Region (NCR) and elsewhere in the Province.

After some initial discussions with the Committee, I visited and made a study of the functioning of almost twenty Christian colleges, mostly in the South. This work was made easy as I was stationed for six months in Mysore, that is, from July 2007 to January 2008. I also visited St. Xavier's College, Mumbai and Kolkotta. Although most of the colleges I visited were funded by the UGC, quite a few of them had started self-financing courses as well. I also visited the offices of the All India Council for Technical Education as well as the National Council for Teacher Education, and had discussions with officials there regarding the procedures for the establishment of Management and Technical Education as well as Teacher Education. With all the information I gathered, I had detailed discussion with the Higher Education Commission in Delhi.

We decided to try to establish a Xavier Institute of Technology and Management (XITM), making use of six acres of land presently part of St. Xavier's School, Shahbad, Delhi, and a College of Education in the Nazareth Niwas property in Jaipur. Fr. Jose Jacob, S.J., the then Principal of St. Xavier's, Jaipur and Fr. George Peter, S.J., Director of the Loyola Vocational Centre, undertook the responsibility for getting the B.Ed. College building constructed in Jaipur. The building was ready by the end of 2009. However, by then there was a total ban of any new B.Ed. colleges in the whole of Rajasthan for an indefinite period. So we decided to use the building for a college, offering various degree programs, like B.Com, B.A. in English Literature, B.C.A., etc., affiliated

to the Rajasthan University. At the formal inauguration of St. Xavier's College, Jaipur on 10 August 2010, the Chief Guest, Mr. Ashok Gehlot, then Chief Minister of Rajasthan, appealed to the Jesuits to go beyond a college and establish a Xavier University in Jaipur. He also promised to give from the government sufficient land for the purpose at a subsidized rate. Fr. Varkey Perekkatt, S.J., Rector of St. Xavier's School and College, followed up this offer in 2011, and obtained from the State Government 30 acres of land in Neuta, about 26 kilometers from St. Xavier's College, at subsidized rate. In the Neuta campus initial buildings are now under construction, under the direction and supervision of Fr. Glenn Menezes, S.J., Fr. John Ravi, S.J. and Br. Gyan Prakash S.J., for an eventual establishment of the Xavier University of Jaipur - a fulfillment of the dream of Sir Mirza Ismail and Dr. Mary Aquino Nazareth.

As far as the establishment of XITM is concerned, we approached all the appropriate authorities for the necessary permission: the DDA Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Lt Governor of Delhi and the Urban development Minister, and a host of other bureaucrats. It took almost three years to get a definite answer and that too in the negative. Since St. Xavier's School, Shahbad comes within the sector 26 of Rohini, which is a residential area, no higher educational institution is permitted according to the Master Plan of Delhi. Thus the attempt to establish XITM had to be given up.

In the meantime we had a series of negotiations with the XLRI, Jamshedpur, XIM Bhubaneshwar and Georgetown University, Washington D.C., U.S.A., for possible collaboration to establish an institute of Management in a big plot of 20 acres of land which the Delhi

Jesuit Society owned in Jajhar distric of Haryana, about 30 kilometers from Gurgaon. We faced innumerable setbacks and disappointments in our negotiations with these institutions for over a period of four years. Finally a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the XLRI Jamshedpur, to establish an XLRI, Delhi, in Jhajhar district which falls within the NCR. Construction work was started in November 2012. XLRI Delhi is a project of inter-Provincial cooperation between two Jesuit Provinces – Delhi and Jamshedpur. According to the MOU, XLRI Jamshedpur will provide the necessary finance and personnel initially. As and when Delhi Jesuits get trained and qualified they will be absorbed into the teaching and administrative positions of the new institute. I am extremely happy that, with my experience in higher education, I could play a key role in ushering in Jesuit educational endeavours at the tertiary level in Delhi Jesuit Province

Another assignment I got in 2007 was the establishment of what is today known as Navjivan Renewal Centre in St. Xavier's, Delhi, campus. I had to get an architect, got plans made, got the plans approved by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, and then got the building constructed by competent builders – all these involved persistent, prolonged and painstaking efforts. The work was completed only by July 2013, after six years of labour.

A Jesuit College in Delhi An Apparently Elusive Dream

As mentioned earlier, a Jesuit College was established in Delhi in the late 1940s, perhaps without sufficient preparation and proper planning. Consequently it was a short-lived attempt or an ill-conceived misadventure. From 1960 to 1970, several Jesuit stalwarts in the field of education made enormous attempts to persuade the Jesuit Provincials of India, especially the Provincial of Patna, to grant the necessary permission and resources to establish a Jesuit college in the national capital, Delhi. Prominent among them were Fr. Frank Loesch, S.J., Fr. M.M. Balaguer, S.J., Fr. Theophane Mathias, S.J., Fr. Anthony Parel, S.J. and Fr. Jerome D'Souza, S.J. Individually and separately they presented to their religious Superiors concrete proposals in great detail. Unfortunately they were all rejected mostly because of the financial crunch and the paucity of qualified and competent Jesuit personnel. In those days for both of these resources, the Jesuit Society in India depended on the West, especially the United States of America. Ironically the civil authorities had welcomed the Jesuits and promised to give necessary amount of land in a central area. Seeing the phenomenal growth of Delhi in terms of population and the limited availability of land, the great visionary, Fr. Loesch, ended his lengthy proposal with the prophetic words: **"Now or Never."** From 1970 to 2006, no further attempt was made to resume the attempt to establish a Jesuit college in Delhi. In the Delhi Jesuit Provincial Assembly of 2006, I took courage to make an initial proposal for the same. To my great surprise after detailed discussion among the 75 Jesuits gathered in the Heritage Hall of St. Xavier's School, Delhi, the

proposal was accepted in principle almost unanimously. I had the experience as Principal of St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu for six years, and earlier as Associate professor in St. Xavier's College Ranchi. In the following year I was appointed Chairman of the Exploratory Committee for the establishment of higher educational institutions. After detailed discussions and visits to various Catholic Colleges in India, I submitted to Delhi Provincial a Concept Paper, approved by Fr. Thomas Kunnunkal S.J. and Fr. John Ravi, S.J., the other two members of the committee. The Concept Paper was essentially a road map for the Delhi Jesuits to proceed in the field of higher education, in spite of all the constraints and limitations.

THE CONCEPT PAPER

HIGHER EDUCATION IN DELHI JESUIT PROVINCE

Challenges and Opportunities

As a Jesuit Province, headquartered in the knowledge capital of India, at the present juncture of our country's phenomenal development, we are at the confluence of many historical circumstances that urge us to face the challenges of the *Magis* in the field of higher education. We cite here a few such circumstances:

1. Higher Education in the Country since Independence:

Urgent and imperative Need for Innovation Expansion, Inclusion and Excellence.

During the past six decades since Independence there has been immense expansion of higher educational facilities in India; but they have been proved to be grossly inadequate. Let us look at the statistical

dates of expansion *vis-a-vis* the demand of a fast developing India today.

<i>Institutions /Students/Teachers</i>	<i>In 1947</i>	<i>In 2007</i>
Number of Universities	20	378
Number of Colleges	500	18064
Number of Teaching Staff	15,000	4,80000
Number of Students enrolled	1,00,000	112,00000
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)	1%	10%
GER in USA & Canada today		60%
GER in Most European Countries		40-45%
Asian Average of GER		15%
Minimum GER for sustainable economic development		20-25%

*(GER is calculated for the relevant age group of 18 to 24 years)

It is to be acknowledged that higher education has made significant contribution to economic development, social progress and political democracy in Independent India. However, in spite of the phenomenal expansion in higher education since 1947, India is far behind the threshold level of 20% GER, essential for sustainable economic development. As far as the quality of higher education is concerned, there is much to be desired. Hardly 250 of the 18064 colleges in the country have the potential for excellence, academically and in infrastructural facilities. Moreover, large segment of our population – the deprived, the marginalized, the economically and socially backward – just do not have access to higher education and their GER is abysmally low. Hence at the launching of the 11th Five Plan early this year, the Government of India, in consultation with MHRD, the UGC the Planning Commission, the Vice Chancellors of Universities, and prominent academicians, has drawn up plans for a multi-pronged

strategy for innovation. They include:

1. **Expansion** : Increase the GER to 15% by 2012, and 20% by the end of the 12th plan by 2017 by establishing large number of colleges and universities (State and Central), and by strengthening the existing institutions of higher education
2. **Inclusion and Equity** : Expansion would be made in such a manner that it offers equitable access to all, especially those who at present suffer from disparities on account of region, gender social and economic status, caste and religion considerations, physical disabilities etc.
3. **Quality and Excellence** : Ensure that the higher educational system is enabled and empowered to provide quality education and to achieve excellence in the creation and transmission of knowledge,
4. **Private Participation in Higher Education** : Improving facilitation and regulation of private and investment in higher education.
5. **Academic and Administrative Reforms**- encompassing admission system, examination system, curriculum and pedagogy, Faculty selection and appointment, etc
6. **Internationalization of Higher Education** – encompassing issues like international collaboration, promotion of India higher education abroad, entry and regulation of foreign universities in India, etc.,

II. The Priority Initiatives of the South Asian Jesuit Assistancy

About three years ago the South Asian Assistancy began its

consultation of establishment of a Central Xavier University. The most favoured location appears to be National Capital Territory of Delhi, precisely because of its academic and political significance, nationally and internationally. While the Bill for a central legislation enabling the establishment of private universities in the country, tabled in Parliament way back in 1995, has been relegated to the archives, there is new hope in the innovative proposals of the 11th plan. The Commission, appointed by the POSA, has been at work sorting out difference of opinion on the part of the stakeholders and exploring possible new avenues. The POSA has also plan to link up Vidya Jyoti College of Theology with the proposed Xavier University. The call of Delhi Provincial Congregation in December 2006 to establish higher educational institutions in and around Delhi when the Assistancy is working towards the establishment of a Central University in Delhi is definitely a significant historical coincidence, as they will be mutually beneficial beyond measure.

III. The Call of History to Delhi Province : All through the 86 years history of the larger Patna Mission, there have been sporadic discussions on the establishment of a Jesuit college in Delhi. In fact, there existed a Jesuit Nirmala College from 1949 to 1953. It was *temporarily* closed for various reasons. The contributions made by the Jesuit higher educational institutions and their recent expansion are very encouraging signs for us. We believe that it is the call of history now for the Jesuits of Delhi Province to take some bold steps in the field of higher education.

At the crucial juncture of its development, the nation is making

huge plans for massive expansion in higher education, and is calling for private initiatives to supplement its efforts. The Assistancy is making efforts to make its own contribution to create a knowledge society. There seems to be a clear consensus among Delhi Jesuits that we respond to the call of history and face the challenges of road less travelled. We believe that for at Delhi Province, it is confluence of unprecedented historical circumstances. For us the *kairos*, the most appropriate time, is here.

The Committee's Proposals

We propose a two-phased approach for establishing higher educational institutions in Delhi Province. In doing so we have kept in mind the social reality that people's preferences for higher education has changed drastically in recent times; they opt for market-linked professional and technical higher education and do not prefer general Arts, Science, Commerce courses.

Phase 1 is to be completed within two to five years after a firm decision is taken

A. In the National Capital Territory of Delhi

1. In the present school campus in Shahabad-Daultpur (SD), set aside five acres of land, with independent access, for a college offering progressively ten Under Graduate (UG) and Post Graduate (PG) degree programs.
2. We plan to start with five or six UG programs and gradually initiate additional UG and PG programs. We could start with courses in BJMC (Bachelor's in Journalism and Mass Communication) LL.B (five-year integrated degree program), B.Ed, BBA/BBS and B.Sc in Information Technology

3. In order to start the College and course, we need to get the approval from the Delhi State Government, from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for certain subjects and from the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) for B. Ed. The college also needs to apply for obtaining affiliation to a University. Here in Delhi the only viable option at present seems to be affiliation to the Indra Prastha University which is increasingly becoming modern, progressive and attuned to the evolving trends of the emerging knowledge society

4. Construct a five-storey building in the Shahabad-Daultpur campus, with all the necessary infrastructural facilities, for the purposes of ten UG and PG programs. It would cost around Rupees ten crores, if built within next two years. The building can be constructed in a phased manner, in order to avoid huge initial investment. For the construction of the building, we need to go through a lengthy process and get the approval of the DDA.

In another three years a college, affiliated to Delhi University and offering conventional courses in Arts, Science and Commerce, may be established in the school campus of 4 Raj Niwas Marg, According to the innovation plans to higher education, proposed by the 11th Plan, these conventional courses will soon be supplemented with skill-based market-linked curricular contents. Fr. Hector D'Souza the Provincial of South Asia, told us that he plans to shift Vidhya Jyothi in the near future to a spacious site close to the proposed Central Xavier University. He also assured us that present Administration Block and Jesuit Residence of Vidya Jyoti could be handed over to the College on terms and conditions agreeable to

Vidya Jyoti and Delhi Province. The present Administration Block could then be used for classrooms, library, science and computer labs, research center etc and the present residence could be converted in to hostel for the college. The college will also have an independent access

B. In Jaipur

- 1) An Institute of Management, offering MBA or PGDBM and with possible collaboration with XLRI, could be established in the present campus of St. Xavier's
- 2) The building, with all necessary infrastructural facilities according to AICTE norms, could be built in the field between the main school building and cycle shed within a period of two years at an estimated cost of about 2.5 crores.
- 3) As per the norms and standards of AICTE, the intake of students per batch is 60 during the first four for five years. Thereafter the number may be increased to 120
- 4) We need to get the approval from the AICTE and the State Government, and affiliation to the Rajasthan University
- 5). A new building could be built at Nazareth Niwas, for XVI, with hostel facilities, Sufficient classroom and other facilities could be built so that we could start two or three UG programs. The B.Ed and B.Com are two possible options. Since the area of the campus is very limited and since the campus is adjacent to commercial hub, the subjects could be chosen, according to the limitations of the Nazareth Niwas property. The total construction cost may be within the range of 2.75 to 3.00 crores.

Administration, Personnel, Education of the Less Privileged, Research Finance

- 1) A Board of Directors, nominated by the Provincial, could ensure the implementation of the plan of action and policy decisions, and progressively monitor necessary changes according to the evolving trends. The Board should also ensure the institutions are exemplars of excellence.
- 2) The faculty members and even the heads of each institution may have to be lay persons, as we do not at present have qualified Jesuit personnel. Hopefully, we will be able to hire qualified, competent and dedicated academicians and administrators.
- 3) We also need to explore the possibility of getting from other Provinces qualified and competent Jesuit personnel for administration, at least for the initial years.
- 4) We also need to send for higher studies some of our younger men who could qualify to be done on a priority basis, without any further delay.
- 5) In each institution, provision for the admission and education of the poor section of society must be made mandatory. The institution should ensure quality of opportunity for all the sections of society
- 6) Optimum utilization of the infrastructural facilities for the benefit of the maximum number of students by the shift system, by making available to the students and scholars the facilities of the library, computer labs, internet facilities etc, should be normal pattern of the functioning of our colleges

- 7) Since research is essential in the pursuit of excellence, we need to make continuous effort to make our colleges the hub of research-oriented projects. There are synergies between teaching and research that enrich each other
- 8) The sources of the initial financial support could be the Apostolic Fund of the Delhi Jesuit Society, contributions from the Alumni, friends and well-wishers, possible contributions from Jesuit Conferences in other Assistancies as well as funding agencies

Phase II

- 1) If we have fairly well established higher educational institutions, we may be able to get university status in a matter of five to seven years
- 2) We need to plan ahead and buy some land in the NCT/NCR and/or around Jaipur. At present land is available at the reasonable price beyond Guargaon or closer to Jaipur. We propose that we buy about 20 acres of land for a higher educational complex
- 3) Since the needs and demands of society are changing in an ever-accelerating momentum, we need to continuously adapt our institutions, courses, facilities, methods of operation, etc to the evolving requirements of society. We need to take into account the fact the career options as well as hopes and aspirations of the educated class are continuously evolving

The challenges and struggles that we will have to face in venturing in to the apostolate of higher education are enormous. However, we believe that, united with one another in the spirit of the Magis, we will be able

to face them and turn them in to opportunities of greater service. We believe that all the projects of Phase I may be initiated simultaneously, if we delegate functions and distribute responsibilities.

Some Additional Notes

The Province Congregation of December 2006 unanimously passed a postulatum, giving a mandate to the Provincial to initiate the process of establishing institutions of tertiary education in the Province. The Provincial took the follow-up action by appointing, on 15th August 2007, an Exploratory Committee, consisting of Fr. Thomas Kunnunkal , Fr. John Ravi and Fr. P.T. Augustine. Fr. Provincial briefed the committee on its exploratory functions. The committee began its work that very day. Within a week the committee had six meetings with the Jesuits of Delhi and Jaipur areas separately, with representatives of Alumni Associations, with some prominent citizens, intellectuals and academicians. The committee submitted its first report to the provincial on 22nd August 2007. Individually we consulted a wide range of interest groups, stakeholders and persons who could help us in the new venture. We also visited and made a study of the outstanding higher educational institutions – Jesuit and non-Jesuit - in the country. We submitted to the Provincial, four additional reports with a wide range of information on 25th August, 10th and 30th September and on 22nd October 2007. We wrote to the Provincial on 30th October and again on 3rd December 2007, requesting him to take an early decision and give us the green signal to proceed further in the proposed direction. We continued our search and discussions on a wide variety of issues connected with the possible establishment of higher educational institutions.

The Committee members had discussions among themselves on 17th September, and together we met the Provincial at 6.00 p.m. on that day. Having accepted the Committee's recommendation, the Provincial sent an exploratory letter to Jamshedpur Provincial for possible collaboration with XLRI for establishing an Institute of Management in Delhi Province. On his recommendation, we prepared this position paper on the basis of all the information and data we gathered from various sources, and our own study, experiences and observations. This concept Paper is the Committee's roadmap for operationalising the Province's vision for venturing into a new apostolate, keeping in mind the incalculable contributions that we can make to the knowledge society in our country at this time of accelerating changes and escalating hopes. The paper is NOT the final document. It is presented to the Province for comments, suggestions, and a critical evaluation of the proposed operational scheme.



Perfection has to do with the end product, but
excellence has to do with the process.

~ Jerry Moran



**Xavier's, Delhi Celebrating
the Golden Jubilee in 2009 - 10**



















*Dr. Shekhar Agarwal receiving Lifetime Achievement Award
from Shri Kapil Sibal*



*Mr. Yakhub Mathew
1982 Batch of Xavier's*



*Mr. Ajay Dewan
President, Doxa*



The Hall of Honour



*Once Cecil Hotel, now Heritage Building,
maintained and used
by St. Xavier's School, Delhi*



Navjivan Renewal Centre at Xavier's Campus

XVII

BACK IN ST. XAVIER'S SCHOOL, DELHI, AS RECTOR

*It is not so important to add years to your life
as it is life to your years*

~ Alexis Carroll

21st Century Vision For Xavier's, Delhi:

It may be a coincidence but the fact is that in my career as the Principal or as the Rector of the leading schools in Patna, Delhi or Jaipur I got a second chance. I started my St. Michael's school days as Principal-in-charge; later I returned to the same place as its full-fledged Principal; similarly in Jaipur too I had two terms - one more eventful than the other.

Finally I was once again back in Delhi, Xavier's as its new Rector in 2009, the time when the school achieved a major milestone – fifty years of its inception. As an educator of modern times I had grown in wisdom and strength on account of the vast experience I had in the field of education. As a Jesuit I was very privileged to have been able to influence the educational policies of the three major Indian Jesuit provinces: Patna, Delhi and Nepal. Incidentally I worked as the Province Coordinator for Education at the Secondary and Higher Education levels, other than being the Principals of the major schools/colleges in these provinces. With my expertise I decided to bring in new changes in Xavier's, Delhi in my new role as its Rector.

When Xavier's, Delhi had completed its first milestone, i.e. 25 years of its establishment many of the administrators, staff and students had one common dream –what would Xavier's be in its 50th year? How would the school celebrate its Golden Jubilee? What would be the composition of its clientele? What would be the teaching-learning pedagogy used in 2009 in Xavier's? Curious people asked various such questions about the future of Xavier's and they all had lot of dreams about the time when the school would be celebrating its Golden Jubilee. The Xavier Times, our school's life line publication came out with write-ups on these issues. Great visionaries gave expression to their dream about the School in 2010.

I was probably the luckiest Delhi Jesuit to be appointed as its golden jubilee Rector and the onus of the celebration of the Jubilee in a fitting way was on me. As its new Rector I not only decided to celebrate the Golden Jubilee in a fitting manner but also develop its infrastructure that would make Xavier's a world class institution.

Kick-Starting Golden Jubilee Celebrations

My first priority was to see that the Golden Jubilee was celebrated in a very fitting manner. The school reeling under the impact of the 6th Pay Commission had not done much with regard to the preparation for the Jubilee. I knew it was a major milestone achieved by the school in its progress and I didn't want the opportunity to be missed on account of some financial crunch. We got ready a Golden Jubilee Committee that consisted of representatives from the staff and the management. Thus the Golden Jubilee year had many grand scale events, which further elevated the spirit of completing 50 years.

The celebrations commenced with a special assembly on 30th July, 2009, on the eve of the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. In the meantime the Senior school got ready with a grand golden jubilee cultural evening. It was held on 30th October, 2009. Shri Ajay Maken, the then honourable Minister of State for Home Affairs and an ex-Xaverian of the '82 batch, was the Chief Guest for the occasion. In December the Junior School came up with the famous musical play 'The Sound of Music', the two and a half hour long play-almost a re-run of the movie on the stage, which had the audience gripped with a 50 odd lively choir, outstanding choreography, settings and stage props, perfect costumes and of course brilliant acting performances. There were two shows- one on 12th December, 2009 when honourable Arun Jaitley, M.P. and the then Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha was the Chief Guest. The second show was organized on 13th December when Fr. Thomas Athazhapadam, the Principal in the first year of the school, was the chief guest.

DOXA too joined the School in organizing the Golden Jubilee Celebrations. The annual DOXA dinner was celebrated with great enthusiasm. It was organized by DOXA EC Members on 19th December, 2009. The event was held on the Xavier's grounds which were magnificently decorated for the dinner from 7:30 pm onwards. Another important event organized by DOXA was the ***Treasure Hunt-Challenge***, the first of its kind organized on 22nd November, 2009. It was graced by the presence of Mrs. Prabha Thakur, Rajya Sabha M.P.

One of the mega events of the Golden Jubilee year was the grand dinner at the Oberoi Hotel, New Delhi on 9th January, 2010. M/s Amit Goel and Vinay Mehra of 1981 batch took initiative in organizing the event.

Christmas in the Prep Department has always been a joyous occasion. Celebrating the Golden Jubilee year of the school, the Prep put up a memorable function on 22nd December, 2009. The Chief Guest for this grandiose event was the then Chief Minister of Delhi, Mrs. Sheila Dikshit. The program began with a prayer dance to thank God for His benevolent mercies upon our school. The dedicated works of the Jesuits was highlighted by a pageant. It brought out their immense contribution to humanity in the field of education and social service.

23rd December, 2009 was a historic day for St. Xavier's School. On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee the Delhi Old Xaverian Association organised a special function in the Millennium Hall to present '*Lifetime Achievement Award*' and '*Xaverian Excellence Award*' to the Xaverians whose contributions have been outstanding in the service of humanity. Honourable Minister of Human Resources Shri Kapil Sibal, Principal Fr. Jose Philip, S.J., former principals Fr. Thomas Athazhapadam, S.J. and Fr. Thomas Kunnunkal, S.J. were the chief guests for the program.

Being in the office in School during its 50th year I began to realize that various precious and valuable possessions are dumped in various corners of the school for the dust to settle over it and long forgotten. I came across many photographs, artifacts, furniture etc which belonged to the Cecil Hotel days as well as the early days of the school but were not well taken care of during the later years. I managed to gather many such valuable objects and arranged them in the old library in the Heritage Building and converted it into a Museum.

Golden Jubilee Memorial Museum:

Presently it is located between the Jubilee Chapel and the Miranda Hall. When the school started in 1960, this place was used as a chapel. When the library was set up in 1981 the place was used as the stack room for the library. When the library was shifted to the senior school in 1998 the place was used as a storage place.

In July, 2009 I started the work of setting up the museum. There is an independent entry to the museum from the southern side of the Heritage Building. There is also an individual office for the museum adjacent to it. There are photographs of the old students from the starting of the school i.e. in 1960's till 2009 kept in the museum. There are also photographs of various school activities, and of distinguished visitors to the school. There are video and audio cassettes, a music player, a video player, and collections of video and audio cassettes which are no longer used, but used to be precious assets during the 70's, 80's and 90's. There are gramophones, records and a gramophone player kept in the museum. Six to seven decade old songs are preserved in the museum. There are some sacred vessels kept in the museum along with all the sacred books used in the chapel for the last 50 years.

These sacred books are no longer in use. Antique furniture used by the hotel is still preserved and has been restored in the museum. The Corinthian columns within the museum area are restored to their original beauty and elegance.

Golden Jubilee Chapel:

Xavier's has been a Mass centre for St. Mary's Parish since the beginning of the school but ironically we didn't have a permanent chapel. We decided to convert the old reception of the Hotel into a chapel. In July 2009, the restoration work of the place was started and the place was converted into a chapel. It has been named the Golden Jubilee Chapel and was inaugurated on 3rd December, 2009. It is located next to the front facade of the Heritage Building. It is now a place for the students, the staff members to come and pray as well as attend masses on special occasions.

HALL OF FAME


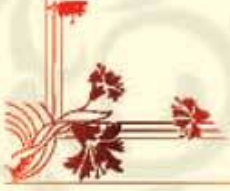
23rd December 2009 was a historic day for St. Xavier's School. On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee the Delhi Old Xaverian Association organised a special function in the Millennium Hall to present 'Lifetime Achievement Award' and 'Xaverian Excellence Award' to the Xaverians whose contributions have been outstanding in the service of humanity. St. Xavier's School Delhi Salutes its pre-eminent alumni.



LIST OF AWARDEES - 2009

Lifetime Achievement Awards

S. No.	Name	Batch
1	Mr. Ajay Maken	1982
2	Mr. Raghav Bahl	1979
3	Mr. Upmanyu Chatterjee	1976
4	Mr. Alok Kumar Verma	1975
5	Mr. Gopal Subramaniam	1974
6	Dr Arun Sethi	1973
7	Mr. Anirudh C. Uppal	1969
8	Dr Shekhar Aggarwal	1969
9	Mr. Harish Manwani	1969
11	Mr. Arun Jaitley	1969
12	Mr. Rakesh Mehta	1968
13	Justice Vikramjit Sen	1967
14	Mr. Dinesh Dhamija	1967
15	Air Marshal Dhiraj Kukreja	1967
16	Lt. Gen. Deepak Raj	1966
17	Mr. Harsha Vardhana Singh	1974
18	Mr. Ramu Damodaran	1972



Xavier Excellence Awards

S.No.	Name	Batch
1	Mr. Niket Kaushik	1989
2	Mr. Nikhil Mohan	1985
3	Mr. Samir Arora	1985
4	Mr. Joby Joseph	1982
5	Mr. Yakub Mathew	1982
6	Mr. Sunil Gujral	1981
7	Mr. Sameer Gupta	1981
8	Mr. Tarun Vij	1981
9	Mr. Amit Goel	1981
11	Mr. Ajay Kumar	1979
12	Mr. Sudhanshu Mittal	1979
13	Mr. Amit Tandon	1979
14	Mr. Mr. Pinaki Mishra	1977
15	Mr. Alexander Kuruvilla	1977
16	Mr. Arun Khurana	1977
17	Mr. Ishwar Puri	1976
18	Mr. Atul Punj	1976
19	Mr. Deepak Dewan	1973
20	Mr. Michael Pinto	1972
21	Maj. Gen. Philip Campose	1971
22	Mr. Loveleen Singhal	1969

23	Mr. Sunil Malhotra	1969
24	Mr. Anil Sarin	1968
25	Mr. Amitav Banerjee	1969
26	Mr. Rohit Aggrawal	1989
27	Mr. Sachin Malhotra	1989

LIST OF AWARDEES - 2014

Lifetime Achievement Awards

- 1 Mr. Pavan K. Varma - I.F.S. (RETD) Ex-Ambassador (1969)
- 2 Air Marshar R. K. Sharma - Vice-Chief I.A.F. (1970)
- 3 Lt. Gen. Philip Campose - Vice-Chief of Staff, Indian Army (1971)
- 4 Lt. Gen. Rajan Bhakhshi - G.O.C. In C Northern Command (1972)
- 5 Dr Ishwar K. Puri - Dean McMaster Univ. Canada (1976)
- 6 Prof. Dinesh Singh - Vice Chancellor – Delhi Univ. (1972)
- 7 Dr. Rahul Ram - Indian Ocean – Band (1981)
- 8 Mr. Anil Gupta - Havell's Group – Jt. MD (1987)

Excellence Awards

- 1 Mr. Saurabh Mittal - Founder – MD – India Bulls (1992)
- 2 Mr. Bhupendra Chaubey - Political Editor – CNN – IBN (1994)
- 3 Mr. Jagdish Kaliraman - Wrestler (1994)

Concluding Golden Jubilee Celebrations:

On 23 January 2010 when we concluded the Golden Jubilee celebrations, Mr. Gopal Subramaniam, a Xaverian of 1967 batch and the then Solicitor General of India, was conferred with the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by his Alma Mater. In the function organized in the school's Millennium Hall, the Chief Guest, the emeritus Archbishop of Delhi, Vincent Concessao and the auxiliary Bishop Franco, the guest of honour Fr. Thomas Kunnunkal, S.J.- the school's longest serving principal, did the honours for Gopal Subramaniam. With this grand finale the Golden Jubilee celebrations came to an end.

I had great satisfaction in organizing this event in such a memorable manner.

New Visions For Xavier's, Delhi

After the successful celebration of the Golden Jubilee I decided to focus more on giving the school a facelift in accordance with the technology driven modern education.

Fr. Loesch Memorial Jesuit Residence:

After the Golden Jubilee celebrations my focus was shifted to making a proper residence for the Xavier Jesuit community. From the inception of the school the Jesuits were accommodated in a building built in the 1850's and it was a privately owned bungalow which was later bought by the Cecil Hotel and it became an important part of the hotel complex. (In the 1870's the Anglican Brothers Rev. Samuel Scot Allnut and his companions stayed here for a few years. Rev. S.S. Allnut later founded St. Stephen's College in 1881 and was its first Principal.) During the Cecil days, the guests used the suite of rooms in the building. The

hundred and fifty year old building required a lot of repair every year.

Hence we decided to renovate the upper floor of the Heritage building for providing accommodation to the Jesuits. The renovation work was started in October 2011 and was completed on 4th July, 2012. It has been named after Fr. Frank Loesch, S.J. the founder of St. Xavier's School. At the centre of the upper floor above the Miranda Hall, there is a magnificent and beautiful circular open area which is known as Heritage Plaza, well equipped with lights, chairs, tables etc. The father's residence consists of two conference rooms, well furnished with wooden articles, a home theatre, a recreation room, a clean kitchen and 12 individual rooms for the resident fathers. Apart from these, the main attraction is the 117 years old wooden floor tiling which has been polished, updated and retained after a lot of renovation work.

The Heritage building was built around 1900 and has now got a heritage status granted by the Archeological Survey of India. On the ground floor of the building we have the Golden Jubilee Chapel, the Heritage Museum, Basil Miranda Hall and Subroto Basu Hall.

As its Rector one important thing I found about the School was that, though we have progressed a decade and more in the 21st century, many facilities in the School remained un-updated. Hence I wanted to improve the infrastructure facilities of the school. I initiated various changes to modernize the school by renovating as well as adding new facilities.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) Lab

In the new age education I realized the need to introduce technology in class room teaching. One such step taken in the right direction was the setting up of the new **Information Communication Technology (ICT)**

Lab in the Prep department. It is based on Interactive Teaching and Learning process and enables the students to learn by using the Interactive Smart Board. It has a very pleasant and comfortable atmosphere which is appealing to students whenever they enter the lab. The lab is fully air conditioned and spacious. The usage of fascinating technology leaves children between the ages of 4-6 with better understanding due to the visual impact.

The light and sound effects are worth praises. It is well equipped with good speakers, sound mixers and a good quality smart board with a projector and a touch screen. The lab holds the attention of students without leaving any source for distraction. Inside the lab there is a CD collection on various concepts ranging from Mathematics, English, Rhymes to Environment. Internet connection has been provided so that the teacher can download the best videos for students. Each teacher can design her own programs herself.

The lab also provides an opportunity for the teachers to update their skills. They attend various training sessions for the same purpose. Many people, especially teachers from various other schools visit the ICT lab and are highly impressed by the facilities provided. The knowledge given here is not only based on curriculum but it also includes a vast choice of topics. It has the best technology and the best environment for the best use of children. Hence a solid foundation in the use of technology for the learning purpose is made in the ICT lab.

The Lab is appropriately dedicated to the fond memory of Fr. Richard Pereira, S.J., who, after being Principal of several senior secondary schools, took up the work of the Prep Department at the age of seventy three. An amazing Jesuit, he learned Computer Science at that age. He

wrote and published textbooks on Computer Science for the school children. For him working for the AMDG knew no limit.

Hall of Honour

Each year a few old faces retire and new faces join the staff in Xavier's. Over the years hundreds of staff members parted from Xavier's leaving behind their indelible imprints on the Xavier's campus. As I tried to access the old records I found many of the names missing. It was then that I decided to plunge into the 50 year old history of the school and gather the old memories of those dedicated staff members. I got all those photographs framed and dedicated a hall for their memory. It is named the 'Hall of Honour' and it is situated on the ground floor of the Prep Department. This hall has been renovated and the photos of all the former staff members are hung on its walls. The Hall of Honour immortalizes the fond memories of all those who were a part of the great Xaverian family over the years. The Hall of Honour is a uniquely new idea and it is highly appreciated by all, especially the former staff members and the former students. As the Hall is used as the place for Parents-teacher meeting on a regular basis, there are plenty of daily visitors to it.

Building New Sports Infrastructure:

Presently Xavier's provides excellent infrastructure, one of the best among Delhi schools, for the students to excel in sports. These include all facilities for athletics, a badminton court, two basket ball courts, one cricket and football field including one practice pitch, baseball field, table tennis facilities, volley ball, lawn tennis and a swimming pool. Students are given the freedom to choose and specialize in any sport of their choice. We have produced numerous sports stars in various

games. Xavier's actively competes at all levels of sport - inter-class, inter-house, inter-school, zonal, inter-zonal, state, national and even in inter-nationals too.

The New Lush Green School Play ground:

St. Xavier's is known for its sprawling playgrounds which are probably the most lavish among the good schools of Delhi. The large playground is surrounded by the Basket Ball and the Tennis Courts. When the School re-opened in April 2011 most of the sports enthusiasts looked a bit glum as the play ground was out of their reach. The work was in progress for some months. But after summer vacation the place looked beautiful with lush green grass covering the entire ground. The ground was renovated and overlain with a lush carpet of green, resurfaced, and demarcated for different sports. In 2011 when we celebrated the 50th Sports Day this was a perfect gift for the budding Xaverian sportspersons. Overlooked by the Jubilee Chapel, the playground is a delight for the students and the visitors alike. This ground is used for Cricket, Football, Softball and athletics. While a new pitch has been made for producing the future Tendulkars and Sehwags, adrenaline pumping, spirited matches are witnessed on the football area. The softball area is adjacent the Junior school. While the ground was always central to the school life, the recent improvements have raised the spirits of the players and the sports lovers and have made every member of the school community feel proud of the facilities.

The Skating Rink:

The Junior School students have been given a unique opportunity to come forward and develop their skills in skating. A brand new skating

rink has been built next to the Junior School assembly ground. Regular coaching classes ensure optimum utilization of this ground.

New Volleyball Court:

The improvement of the school infrastructure and facilities added a new brick to the school campus, namely a volleyball court. Built next to the tennis and the basketball courts, the volleyball court is a new addition to our sports infrastructure. It is made to the highest level of perfection, using the best materials that go into building a synthetic court. Complete with a proper net, the court has the dimensions of a national professional court. One can see students enjoying a spirited match during their physical education periods. This has truly been a welcome augmentation to our already excellent school sports facilities.

New Tennis Court:

Next to the school ground is a place which is home to a rising trend in sports - the game of tennis, which is reviving in Xavier's in a big way. The tennis area was reconstructed after the old tennis court had to make way for providing space for another basketball court. The new court now boasts of synthetic play area, and is great for matches as well as routine, everyday practice. The school has started a special coaching program to equip a large number of students to use the new facility. A summer camp saw tremendous enthusiasm and participation from juniors and seniors alike. The courts are also heavily used during the designated physical education periods. A full sized, well demarcated playing area, excellent playing surface, and availability of good tennis balls make the court much in demand. Coaches from professional sports bodies train the students in proper knowledge and skill of the game.

Face-lifted Swimming Pool:

When the talk is about infrastructure and facilities our school has its own mark of standard. The well kept buildings, the royal pathways, the beautiful gardens and also not to forget the school swimming pool. St. Xavier's is blessed to have such a swimming pool, which increases the number of student's participation in the particular sport, year after year. The pool is situated behind the Basil Miranda Hall building between the Prep Department play ground and the basket ball court. There are two pools in school individually both shaped rectangle but together make an 'L-shape' structure. The small pool which is meant for the toddlers of Prep Department is 10m long, 7.5m wide and 1m deep. The tiny tots are brought to the pool for their enjoyment, recreation and to get over their fear of water. From a very tiny age, Xavier's works on the development of confidence in each and every child. We have a number of talented swimmers in the School. The big pool is meant for seniors and juniors which is 25m long, 21m wide. Additional amenities were added like dressing rooms and showers for the students. The gallery has space for over 150 people. We have cultivated a lot of excellence in this pool. Over the years many Xaverians have represented our school in Delhi state as well as national competitions.

Renovated Staff Rooms with a Touch of Class and Excellence:

The old tutorial rooms are things of the past now. A new staff room has been built by combining the old common staff room as well as the old Parent-Teacher Meeting room. This is fully air-conditioned. The teachers have got a welcome relief from the humid weather in summer! In the Junior School the new staff room in the second floor has been named after Fr. Charles Saldhana - the first Principal of the School. It

has been beautifully made and maintained. The fresh new look of the staff room provides the ambience for the staff to relax and enjoy the nature around. It is magnificent in its look and fresh in its creation.

When the teachers of the Prep Department returned to the school after the summer vacation this year, they were very pleasantly surprised to see that their Staff Room and the Office had seen a sea-change during their absence. There was a magical touch and transformation in every corner – all to their delight, comfort and satisfaction.

New Canteen:

The school canteen has been given a facelift. There are more counters bringing down the rush during the long break. There are chairs placed outside for the students to sit and enjoy their snacks. The old TT room has been converted into a spacious canteen and the staff members can enjoy a good tea break!

Spacious Class Rooms:

The class rooms in Xavier's are exemplary. As the strength of each section on an average ranges between 50-55 students, the class rooms are designed to be large enough and provide sufficient space for each student. The senior school classrooms have been renovated and got extra space to provide enough mobility to the students. These spacious classrooms provide a conducive ambience for effective teaching and learning experiences. Each class room has one or more display boards. These boards are used to display the fabulous artwork by the students, especially in the Prep-Department. All the class rooms are properly lighted and have enough ventilation for air passage.

CCTV & Smart Class Rooms:

In January 2012, the entire school turned to smart school with installation of Smart Boards in the classrooms. It has proved to be very useful to students by making the learning experience more fun and interesting. With the installation of Smart Boards teaching and learning have taken a new dimension in Xavier's. The installation of CCTVs enhanced the security of the students in the school. Fr. Jose Jacob, S.J., the present principal took the leading role in getting these smart devices installed in the school.

Delhi Jesuits Celebrating Silver Jubilee:

2013 was very significant for the Delhi Jesuits. We celebrated the 25th year of Delhi Jesuit province in October. Since the inception of the first Jesuit community in 1959 we have been reaching out to the society in as many ways as possible, very zealously and enthusiastically. Today Delhi Jesuits have made their presence in six north Indian states and run seven leading public schools.



*If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a
great way.*

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

XVIII:

DEDICATED TO THE SERVICE OF GOD

*If you are going to achieve excellence in big things,
you develop the habit in little matters.
Excellence is not an exception it is a prevailing attitude.
~ Colin Powell*

Of the nine children my parents have, four of us dedicated our lives to the service of God, two of us brothers became priests, and two sisters became nuns in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, while the others raised up families of their own. As religious of the Sacred Heart Congregation of Sisters, my two sisters, Sr. Mary Francoi and Sr. Mary Tharsis, were trained in the nursing profession, and spent their lives serving the suffering humanity in various hospitals in India, Germany

and Africa. Sr. Francoi died in 2007 at the age of 74, and my younger sister, Sr. Tharsis, still continues her mission of service to the sick and the elderly in her Congregation's institute for the aged in Kerala.

My Personal Loss:

I do strongly believe that life is never a smooth journey with happy memories. In the midst of all my priestly and professional accomplishments I had my share of sorrow and bereavements too. In my priestly life and apostolate over a quarter of a century, I received constant support and encouragement not only from my Jesuit companions but more especially from my priest brother, Fr. P.T. Thomas who had joined the diocese of Varanasi. His sudden death was an irreparable loss for me, as a priest and as his younger brother. He died in a car accident at 6.15 am, on 30th November 2000, while he was travelling with his priest assistant from Varanasi to Francispur, about 150 kilometers' journey, in order to inspect a school there. All the three occupants of the car, including the driver, died in the accident. It was a deeply shocking news for me in Delhi. Several of my grieving brothers and sisters and other relatives arrived in Varanasi to bid our final farewell to the one whom we loved dearly, whom God chose to call to eternal life while he was 65 years old.

Fr. P.T. Thomas was four years elder to me and we studied together in High school. He joined the Society in 1956, the first missionary from our family. He was ordained a priest in 1966. He too had been a teacher, an administrator and finally the Diocesan Secretary of Education in Varanasi for 8 years prior to the fateful day. He was also involved in pastoral ministry wherever he was posted. From 1987 to 1992 he worked at the Church of Our Lady of Victory, New York. Wherever he

was and in whatever he did, he was hardworking, meticulous in planning, organization, and execution of work, deeply committed and dedicated and loyal to his superiors. He was compassionate and generous towards the poor and the needy and helped them whenever and wherever it was possible.

After his bypass surgery he was advised to slow down but he replied: "I am missionary sent to the service of God and His people. I will keep working until the One who sent me calls me back". And so he did. He served God's people till his last breath of his life, totally and unreservedly. He has been a constant support and strength to me, especially in my priesthood and religious life.

FINAL FAREWELL TO A BROTHER

Tribute paid to Fr. P.T. Thomas, at his funeral in the Varanasi Cathedral on 2nd December, 2000 by Fr. P.T. Augustine, S.J.

Your Lordship Bishop Patrick D'Souza, Your Lordship Bishop Dominic Kokatt, Reverend Fathers, Sisters and friends,

Permit me to say a few words as a tribute to my brother, Fr. P.T. Thomas, who has been called to eternal life by the Lord. As we bid good bye to him, indescribable sorrow wells up in our hearts. But here is also reason for thanksgiving, as he has completed, in a magnificent manner his life's mission and the Lord's call, serving and His people till the last breath of his life.

Fr. Thomas was over four years older to me and we studied together in the High School and passed matric together in 1956. Fr. Cyriac, our classmate, has been a constant companion and support for Fr. Thomas from those school days till the end of his life.

Fr. Thomas was born on 13th November 1935 as the fifth of nine children of our parents. Our family, like many other families of the time, went through the financial hardships and struggles on the Second World War era and its aftermath. From our parents we imbibed deep faith in God and trust in His providential care. We learnt to struggle against hardships of life, to be persevering in all our efforts, to be deeply committed and dedicated to the tasks and goals, to dream dreams and to pay the price for its realization, to be loyal to the Church and its legitimate authority, and above all, to be kind and compassionate to those who are less fortunate, those who have fallen on the wayside of life's journey. When he came to Varanasi in 1956 for the first time, as the first missionary from our family, Fr. P.T. Thomas brought with him these eminent qualities of heart and mind. Ordained priest in 1966, his field of priestly ministry was mainly in education, as teacher, lecturer, Principal and finally as Varanasi Diocesan Secretary for Education for the last eight years. For a period of five years, from 1987 to 1992, he was fully involved in pastoral ministry in the Church of Our Lady of Victory, New York, where he established lasting friendships in a foreign land. Wherever he was and whatever he did, he was hardworking, meticulous in planning, organization, and execution of work, deeply committed and dedicated, and loyal to his Superiors. After his Bypass surgery in 1993, friends advised him to slow down and rest. His reply was simple: "I am a missionary sent to the service of God and His people. I will keep working until the One who sent me calls me back". And so he did. He served God's people till the last breath of his life, totally and unreservedly.

Fr. Thomas was compassionate and generous towards the poor and the needy, and helped them whenever and wherever it was possible. In the institutions and places where he worked, he did not have servants or peons or drivers. They were all his friends and he treated them as such, sharing with them not only material things, but even his personal experiences and lighter moments on life.

Sociable and affable by nature, he easily made friends with people of all sections of society, rich or poor. People who met him even once will not forget him easily. I can very well understand why such a massive gathering of people are here to bid good bye to him, why so many schools in the Diocese are closed for two days in his honour, why so many of the Priests, Sisters and people of all religions are in tears as we bid farewell to Fr. Thomas. He has been a dear friend and brother to all of you. Our tear, our grief, our sorrow, the offering of flowers and bouquets are symbolic expressions of our promise to him that he will forever be in our hearts always. The man who has love in his heart will never die, but will live forever in the hearts of other people.

There is one person to whom Fr. Thomas had always been loyal and devoted, and one who stood by him in all his struggles, trials and difficulties of life, one who touched his life and enabled him to grow and give his best to the world, one who was, above all, a father and a mother and a brother and a sister and a companion-all rolled into one. He is His Lordship Bishop Patrick D'Souza. On behalf of Fr. Thomas' family and myself, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to him for that entire he has been and has done for my brother, Fr. Thomas, all through his priestly ministry. Bishop Dominic of Gorakhpur Diocese was a great friend and a constant source of inspiration and support for

Fr. Thomas. Our family's grateful to you, your Lordship Bishop Dominic and also to the priests of your Diocese.

Almost a hundred and thirty priests are here to concelebrate at Fr. Thomas's funeral mass. You priest-companions of Fr. Thomas indeed celebrated life with him and shared in his joys and sorrows, struggles and accomplishment. I express our family's immense gratitude to each of you.

The hundreds of Religious Sisters who are here on this occasions and shed tears of sorrow, had also shared in his joys and happiness. Fr. Thomas had an exceptional knack to cheer up people and to brighten up a gathering with his characteristic humour, his cheerfulness, sociability and gentlemanliness. Many of your Sisters were always at his side whenever he was ill and needed help. And each of you has been a real sister to him. Thank you, my dear sisters, for what you have been to my brother.

On behalf of our family, I, his younger brother, want to bid farewell to Fr. Thomas, even though he can no longer hear my voice:

Goodbye to you, my brother, who served God and His people devotedly and faithfully in the Varanasi Diocese, for over thirty four years as a priest.

Goodbye to you, my brother, who has been a source of inspiration and strength to many people - priests, Religious, and lay people. The bruises, cuts and scars on your face and the broken bones and bandages on your body will remain in our minds as visible symbols of the enormous struggles and sacrifices you made all through your life for the spread of the good news of God's love for his people. You are rightly in the footsteps of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

Goodbye to you my brother, who loved every member of our family so dearly, and whose affection and love you experienced in abundant measure. Representing the family, your brother Sebastian, Sister Tharsis and myself and many of your nephews, nieces and other relatives are here to bid you the final farewell, with a deep sense of sorrow, and yet with immense gratitude to God who gave you to our family for 65 years. We are resigned to God's will and his plan for you and for our family, even though our loss is immeasurable and pain unbearable.

And finally, goodbye to you, my brother, who has been a constant support and strength to me, especially in my priesthood and religious life. My personal loss is immense, but let God's will be done.

Dear brother, as you walked in heaven at 6.15 am. On 30th November, 2000, with your usual humour and characteristic smile I'm sure God our Father was there to welcome you at the gates of paradise with the words: Well done, good and faithful servant, Enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

May God be with you! And may you be with God. This is our prayer until we meet again in His eternal kingdom.



*This is the very perfection of a man, to find out his own
imperfections.*

~ Saint Augustine



Fr. P.T. Thomas



With My Brothers, Sisters, aunt Sr. Gertrude



Father



Mother



With brother and Sisters



At home with sister and brother





In 1973



In 1979



Sr. Tharsis, S.H.



With Sr. Jeslin C.M.C, my niece



My aunt Sr. Gertrude, S.H.



With my niece Biji in Ireland



With my nephew Jerbin & Family in Switzerland



With Friends Mr. Tomichan and his wife Bina in U.S.A



With my nephew Jerbin in Geneva



With Friends James and Joe in Boston



With my friend Varghese in Los Angeles



With Friends Charles and Mary Carven in London



XIX:

SOME REFLECTIONS ON MY LIFE AND WORK

*Only mediocrity can be trusted to be
always at its best.*

~ Max Beerbohm

For more than four decades I have been involved in educational work at various levels and in a variety of positions and roles, including founding of institutions, establishment of several new departments at the undergraduate and post graduate levels. I have come across some very outstanding teachers in all the educational institutions which I have been associated with. They have inspired their students, their colleagues, and me personally. My gratitude to them all!

1. My Philosophy of Life and Work

Others often refer to me as 'a man of few words'. I consider listening is an extremely important element of communication. Listen to the whole person, his/her feelings and sentiments, the body language, the situation and the background, and not merely to the words uttered, however eloquent the person is. Listen more and talk less.

I believe that every human being is indispensable to shape and reshape this world according to God's plan. Each of us has a special role to play, which no other human being can do. My time and talents are God's gift to me; what I do with them is my gift to God. In fact, I believe that on the Judgment Day God will ask me for an account of what I did with the time and talents I received from Him.

2. Dream Big Dreams, Aim to Achieve the Apparently Impossible

The struggles and experiences in life have taught me to dream big dreams, but then wake up and labor to realize those dreams with tenacity and single-mindedness. I have achieved, in my own small way, many things that were considered to be almost impossible. A well-focused mind, determination and dedicated hard work are the elements that produce success and achievements. Action produces its own dynamism. As German philosopher Goethe says:

Seize this very minute;
what you can do or dream
you can do, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power,
and magic in it.
Only engage and then the

mind grows heated;

Begin and then the work will be completed.

My experience in life has been that if you passionately follow your dreams, in some mysterious way the whole universe will conspire to enable you to realize that dream.

3. Passionately Committed to the Education of the Youth:

I have realized over the years that education is the best means of development of people anywhere. And education is a never ending process. So I must be up and doing more and more every day for education and development of the people. I cannot develop and transform the whole world. But I can certainly do a lot to transform and develop the small portion of the world and its people to whom I am sent. I can make a difference to them by taking initiatives, taking risks, taking action and making things happen. Hence I have been passionately committed to the education of the youth, and have been ardently motivating the staff for this noble mission.

Most of the lessons in the art of living, like good manners, etiquette, order, cleanliness, elegance and style, and values like love, respect and care for others, concern and compassion for the weaker sections of society, and passion to aim at greater glory of God, creative and innovative spirit – all these and much more are inculcated in the students during their school days, especially the early stages. Mentoring and guidance given by the teachers with love and understanding will ever be remembered with gratitude. The process of grooming will, of course, continue even after the schooling, but the basic and essential foundation is laid here. What they learn in the school remain with them for the rest of their lives, even after they have

forgotten everything that they learned from the textbooks. Hence the students have great love and respect for their teachers. I consider teaching as one of the noblest professions, and I appreciate the words of Aristotle who said: "Those who give good education are to be honoured more than the parents; for the former give only life, but the latter the art of living." Quotes and dictums, clichés and catch words will not have much lasting effect unless they are accompanied by living personal examples.

4. Persistence and Perseverance

I have also learned that taking action and making things happen and thus making a difference to the world and life around involve many risks, obstacles, opposition even from the most unexpected quarters. Courage, determination and perseverance alone can take us to the goal we set for ourselves. Here I quote another passage from Calvin Coolidge:

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not.

Nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent.

Genius will not.

Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not.

The world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

The slogan "Press on" has solved and will solve

The problems of the human race.

5. Take Action and Make Things Happen and Make A Difference

It has often been said that people are generally divided into three different types: (1) those who make things happen, (2) those who watch things happen, (3) those who don't even know what's happening! Down through the ages those who have achieved greatness in their lives have pretty much agreed that action to make things happen is what living is all about. This message is beautifully expressed in Henry W. Longfellow's Psalm of Life:

Not enjoyment and not sorrow
Is our destined end or way.
But to act, that each tomorrow
Find us, then, be up and doing
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

These words of Longfellow which I memorized as a boy continued to inspire me and urge me to take action and make things happen in the field of education.

6. Face Criticism and Opposition Bravely

I must also add here that those who merely watch things happen or those who do not know what's happening need not necessarily be kind to or appreciative of the one who takes action and makes things happen. Often just the opposite happens. I have learned the painful lesson for life, expressed forcefully by wise men:

You can't make real success without making real enemies.

You can't hold a strong position without strong and continued opposition.

You can't seem right to any, if you don't seem wrong to many.

As long as you aspire, others will conspire.

So long as you try, others will vie.

You will have hostility to face in every place and at every pace.

But go straight ahead to your goal.

As long as your conscience is not

Ashamed to acknowledge you as a friend,

You are certainly on the right track,

The fast track to success and contentment.

From my personal experience in life I have learned the truth of these words of wisdom from Calvin Coolidge, the former President of the United States, who once said: "I cannot give you the recipe for success; but I can give you the recipe for failure – that is, trying to please everybody". This is also applicable to whatever I have accomplished for the benefit of the people and institutions I have served so far.

Over the years, I have also noticed that persons who do the minimum, who are not willing to make any personal sacrifices, who are not willing to do one bit more than the minimum requirement, and above all, those who do not have any experience in management and leadership, often sit in judgment, and criticize and find fault with actions taken by others.

The words of President Theodore Roosevelt aptly express my reaction to critics:

It is not the critics who count, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcomings, who knows the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best knows in the end the high achievement of triumph and who at worst, if he fails while daring greatly, knows his place shall never be with those timid and cold souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

7. The Spirit of Generosity and Abundance Mentality

Personally one of the gifts I have received from God is the spirit of generosity and the 'abundance' mentality – to use Stephen Covey's term in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. It is the natural inclination to share with others time and talents, experience and expertise, money and material things. I received a very sound advice from my Rector, Fr. Jim Cox, when I was first appointed Principal of St. Michael's Higher Secondary School, Patna, thirty one years ago, an advice that stood me in good stead over three decades of educational administration: "Don't be afraid to make mistakes on the generous side." I believe that 'abundance mentality' is always an asset, and 'scarcity mentality' will ultimately prove to be self-defeating and self-destructive.

8. Periodic Transfer is a Great Blessing!

One of the greatest gifts I received from the Jesuit Society during the past four decades of service in the field of education of the youth was transfer from one institution to another in different cities and shift from

one administrative assignment to another. Exposure to different traditions, situations and cultures, opportunity to associate with different groups of staff, parents and the public, and above all the chance to work for and touch the lives of youngsters of various age groups – all these have constantly stimulated my creativity and initiative and enthusiasm to work for the greater and better. It enabled me to see the realities of life from different perspectives. The transfers and postings to different cities in different states gave me also an opportunity to interact with and learn from some of the best educators of the places and familiarize with some of the best practices of outstanding educational institutions.

9. Human Tendency to make mistakes: God uses it to bring about His own design

Some of the apparently wrong decisions taken by the appropriate authorities on the basis of ill-informed facts and data often later turned out to be a blessing in disguise, even when those authorities had gone wrong. Human propensity to err is often the favourite instrument of the Providence to bring about its desired designs.

10. Teaching Transforms both Students and Teachers

While we, as teachers and educators, touch the lives of generations of students and transform them remember us with immense gratitude for the rest of their lives. A positive transformation takes place in our own selves, as we do our duties as mentors and guides.

11. Be Creative to Transform the Impossible into Possible

During my tenure as Principal of St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu, I initiated several new degree programs, some at the Bachelor's degree

level and others at the Master's degree level., all affiliated to Tribhuvan University. One such degree program was Bachelor's in Information Management (BIM}, which was a comparatively new course in the University itself. After several months of efforts to obtain approval from the University and preparations in the College, when the University' director of Planning handed over to me the letter of approval, he ironically said. Here is the approval you sought; but it is a dying course!" That was a challenge for me. At that moment itself I said to myself: I will definitely make sure that it is not a dying course, but a highly flourishing course. With all the efforts I put in it became one of the most popular and sought after courses in the College. A threatening challenge gives me a reassuring stimulus to make things work in favour of our designs. There were several such instances of similar nature in my life.

12. I have left my impression on the hearts and lives of generations of students

After having spent my life for the education of the youth in six educational institutions in as many six different cities, I have great satisfaction that I have touched and transformed the lives of thousands of students who are now pursuing their careers all across the globe. I am sure I have left my imprint on the hearts on a large number of them.

13. Solidarity with the Jesuit Companions

Recently during a casual conversation with me my Jesuit friend and Director of Atmadarshan, the psycho-spiritual renewal centre in Patna, Fr. Joseph Kunnumpuram S.J., told me: "In your Jesuit life you have done more than what the Magis demands". It is of course an exaggeration, as the scope of the magis is unlimited!!!

Another Jesuit friend, Fr. Thomas Karthanam, S.J, who had been for almost two decades Principal of St. Xavier's College of Education, Patna, the institution that I founded in 1988, while introducing me once to the B.Ed. students of 2006 batch said: "Fr. P.T. Augustine is a Jesuit in whose dictionary there is no word called impossible." Other Jesuits like Fr. Robert Athickal, S.J. often remarked: "If an important task is entrusted to Fr. P.T. Augustine, it will be done, and done excellently well, however difficult the task may be." Another fellow Jesuit described me in these beautiful words on a significant occasion: "Fr. Augustine is a trail blazer with a passion for excellence, a meticulous organizer, an excellent administrator, a designer of friendly spaces with a touch of class, and above all a man with a generous heart blended with a human touch." Over the years I have received similar compliments and words and gestures of appreciation from several other Jesuit companions.

I thank them for their encouragement, support and appreciation. In this context I must say that the famous French philosopher and a former student of the Jesuits, was wide off the mark when he said: "Jesuits are a group of men who come together without knowing one another, live together without loving one another and die without mourning one another." But Voltaire unwittingly redeemed himself when he said elsewhere: "All generalizations are false, including this one."!!!

14. The Best Way to Draw the Attention of Others is to Make a Mistake

However, I must add here that life has not been, and will never be, a long stretch of smooth flow of endless stream. It will not be such for any one. If it were such a smooth flow, life would have been most joyless and unpleasant. The brook would lose its music if we remove the

rocks.

Life indeed is a strange mixture of laughter and tear drops, sunshine and heavy clouds. But there has never been such a heavy cloud that the sun could not pierce through.

A man of action will have to face criticisms and condemnation, jealousy and slander. He must also face the reality that nobody is infallible. Criticisms are often an opportunity for introspection and rectification of one's behavior and performance. It is also true that there is a human tendency to find fault with others and their actions rather than the praiseworthy aspects of others' lives. How true is the saying:

'There is lust in every man's eye to see his neighbour's shame. On eagle's wings immortal scandals fly, while virtuous deeds are but born and die. But this does not deter us from striving to become what destiny has called us to be'.

15. We Are What We are Because of What We Do

We are what we are because of what we do with the opportunities given to us and the opportunities we create for ourselves and for others. Often opportunities never come back to us, and so grab them when they do and make a difference to the world around you.

From its inception in 1540, down through the centuries Jesuits have been engaged in a wide variety of human activities where there is scope for the promotion of the Greater Glory of God and the better service of the people. Over the centuries there have been Jesuits who were adventurers and explorers, scientists and space researchers, seismologists and high technologists, legislators and speech writers-cum-advisors to Presidents of the United States, and even circus managers and film producers and actors. The Jesuit Society's motto, *For*

the Greater Glory of God, is the sole criterion for the choice of the Jesuits' service and work

16. It is our objective to **ceaselessly search for excellence**. This striving for excellence should not be restricted to certain selective aspects of our life, work and relationship with one another. On the contrary, it must be comprehensive and inclusive of all the minute details. As Michael Angelo once said, "Trifles constitute perfection. But perfection is no trifle." It is said that the great Greek Philosopher, Aristotle was very fastidious about his dress and personal appearance. A rare trait in a philosopher ! And it is Aristotle who said, "Excellence is not an act, but a habit." What is said about excellence is also true regarding the Jesuit motto of the magis, always striving for the greater and the better.

17. **Personal example** is the most effective way if not the ONLY effective way, to inculcate some of the deepest human values in the youngsters whom we educate, influence and motivate to achieve certain common goals in education.



My mother's wonderful. To me she's perfection.

~ Michael Jackson



XX: STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE:

*Those who educate children well
are more to be honoured than parents,
for these only give life while those the art of living.
~ Aristotle*

Ignatius of Loyola outlined the twin objectives of the founding of the Society of Jesus as the ceaseless striving for the greater glory of God and the more effective service of people. Centuries before Ignatius, the great Saint Irenaeus explained that the glory of God is man (all human beings) fully alive, with all his potentials and talents fully developed. For Ignatius too, work for the greater glory of God is intrinsic to the total development of all human beings. Both are two sides of the same coin, and one cannot exist without the other.

During the long period of his conversion, Ignatius went through very extraordinary spiritual experiences for years together. At the request of

his first companions and for the benefit of the posterity, Ignatius wrote down his spiritual experiences as well as the process he went through, together with the way God guided him. The book has been well known over the centuries since then as "The Spiritual Exercises". Again, persuaded by his friends, Ignatius guided them to go through the same spiritual exercises, precisely so that they would together work for the greater glory of God and the more effective service of others.

The first effect of the Spiritual Exercises on Francis Xavier, Peter Faber and other first companions of Ignatius was to induce them to take up a life of dangerous mortification, continuous prayer and the seclusion of the cloister, quite contrary to what Ignatius intended. This tendency to retreat into a cloistered life exclusively devoted to prayer and austerity would come up again and again in the life of the Society over the centuries, undermining the essential characteristic of the Jesuit Society, which is to seek the greater glory of God in the midst of human activity. Initially at least, many Jesuits spent hours together in prayer, eating and sleeping very little, and obviously with no external activity. By these spiritual excesses, some even shortened their lives.

In recent times there has been an entirely different type of seclusion from the world, equally misguided but certainly not spiritually oriented. Many seem to subscribe to the attitude of Don't-worry-Be-happy. Your apostolate among the people do not really matter; your achievements and accomplishments mean nothing at all, according to them. Some would go still further and criticize and condemn those among their companions who make enormous struggles with the firm belief and conviction that here on earth God's work must truly be our own, realizing that our call as God's creation in His own image is to

continuously strive to re-fashion and develop the entire creation of God. Personally, I am of the firm belief, that work for the greater glory of God essentially involves definitive and purposeful activity: goal-setting, persistent and persevering hard work which may or may not result in achievements and accomplishments. Hence work for achievements and accomplishments are to be highly commended, and certainly not to be condemned as against the spirit of the Society of Jesus

Achievements and Accomplishments

In order to experience the happiness and satisfaction of success, achievement in life, we must have a definite goal. The goal must be definite and specific, and not vague or fuzzy. The image of this goal must be sharpened and re-sharpened continuously, so that it stands out vividly in our thoughts and would guide our actions. We must be clear about what precisely we want to accomplish or achieve. Strong and organized purposefulness towards a definite objective will focus our powers into a strong motivation for attaining our goal.

To the clear vision and definite goal, we must add enthusiasm persistence and hard work. Nothing great has ever been achieved without enthusiasm. Call it by any name - zeal, zest, passion, a fire in the belly – your success in life depends on this inner urge and the great desire to get moving, to get things done. To be excited and enthusiastic about life itself is the starting point of the relentless pursuit of the goal in life. We must realize that it is exciting to be alive and to be able to enjoy so many good things of the life around us. It is not enough to be excited about life only when the sun shines, but even on the cloudy and rainy days as well, when the going is tough and the way is

overshadowed.

Enthusiasm in life is something that can be developed by deliberate choice and determination. It can be stimulated to increase and become more meaningful and purposeful with age. In order to continuously retain enthusiasm and interest, set successive and progressive small goals, the accomplishment of each will be a continuously fascinating experience, and all of them together will add up to a successful life. Something that may come in the way of this constant zest for life, its success and accomplishments would probably be the lack of self-esteem – an ailment which many people are suffering from. One has to abandon oneself utterly to goal that is set, and the goal and the task will mould him to greatness.

Goal setting and enthusiasm must be accompanied by persevering hard work. To accomplish something in life, there is nothing to substitute for the good old habit of hard work. Persistent pursuit of the goal alone will ensure success in life.

Goal-setting, enthusiasm, persistent and persevering hard work need not necessarily result in success, achievement and accomplishment, however noble the motive may be. The person of action must be ready to face criticisms, condemnations, disappointments, failures and frustrations. To fashion a dream and to translate it into a reality is often painful and involves risks.

A Concluding Personal Note

I firmly believe that the Creator has endowed me with certain qualities of certain creativity, zeal, zest, enthusiasm and ambition to be a co-creator, zealously and continuously shaping and moulding this world as best as I can and I have done everything for the greater glory of God.

The natural gifts in me were first nurtured by early experiences of life: scarcity, struggles, disappointments, and yet the unspoken message given to me by my parents was to "Press On". I was, therefore, naturally attracted to the Jesuit Society for its high ideals of seeking the greater and the better, the Magis. The Jesuit saints, canonized and others, those who lived and died for the ideals of the Magis inspired me immensely. Hence I am convinced I am called to dream big dreams and to take all pains to make them a reality. Achievements and accomplishments are part of my work for the greater glory of God and the more effective service of people. In fact, I believe that if I work enthusiastically and zealously for God, some of His glory is bound to rub on to me, though sometimes the reverse can happen. I have achieved, in my own small way, many things that were considered to be almost impossible. A well-focused mind, determination and dedicated hard work are the elements that produce success and achievements. Action produces its own dynamism.

Looking back over my shoulders at the past seventy five years, I have the satisfaction that the one great dream of life cherished and nurtured over the years and decades – to become a Jesuit Priest and spend my life for the development of people mainly through educational endeavours – has been fulfilled and is being fulfilled today. Over four decades of my life I spent in educational administration in some of the prestigious

schools and colleges of Patna Province, Delhi Province and Nepal Jesuit Region. As such I have been in constant contact with, and involved the life and activities of thousands and thousands of students, their parents and the general public. I also have had the privilege of being Coordinator of Education in all these three sectors, both at the school and higher educational levels. In this capacity I have had interaction with a large number of Jesuit educators across the whole of South Asia. Though my work was mainly in education, I was also involved in Pastoral work among the Christian communities in Jaipur and Baramulla, and rural development work in Rajasthan. I am immensely grateful to the Society of Jesus for providing me with these unique opportunities in life. The people with whom and for whom I devoted my life and my services have enriched and ennobled my life. They have left their imprint on my life. I am sure in Patna, in Ranchi, in Kashmir, in Jaipur, in Delhi and in Kathmandu I have left MY FOOTPRINTS on the sands of time.



*Excellence is to do a common thing in an
uncommon way.*

~ Booker T. Washington



The Path I Tread

Born On: 21st December 1939
Place of Birth: Kadanad, Kottayam Dt., Kerala, India
My Parents: Mary & Thomas Joseph Peedikamala

My Academic Qualifications:

Secondary School Leaving Certificate from St. Sebastian's High School, Kadanad in 1956

Pre-University from St. Thomas College, Pala, Kottayam Dt. in 1961

L.Ph. (B.A. Hons) from Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur in 1967

M.A. (Political Science) from Patna University, Patna in 1970.

M.Phil. (International Affairs) from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in 1974

M.Ed. (Sec. School Administration) from Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A., in 1978

M.A. (HRD) from Loyola University, Chicago, U.S.A., in 1993

Religious Studies:

Minor Seminary, Good Shepherd Seminary, Pala from 1958-'60

ENTERED THE SOCIETY OF JESUS ON 1ST JULY 1961

Jesuit Novitiate & Juniorate from X.T.T.I., Patna from 1961-64

My First Profession on 2nd July 1963

Philosophy from Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur, from 1964-67.

Theology from Papal Athaneum, Pune, from 1971-72 and
Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi, from 1972-75.

My Ordination to Priesthood on 30th May 1974.

Tertianship from St. Stanislaus College, Hazaribagh, July-
December 1976.

Final Profession at St. Xavier's, Jaipur, on 15th August 1978.

The Institutions I Served:

Teacher & Hostel Warden of Ara Catholic High School, Bihar
from 1967-68

Lecturer in Political Science at Patna Women's College in 1972

Lecturer in Political Science at St. Xavier's College, Ranchi from
1975-76

Acting Principal of St. Michael's Sr. Sec. School, Patna from
1976-77.

Rector and Teacher at St. Xavier's Sr. Sec. School, Jaipur:
1978-84.

Founder & Pastor of St. Xavier's Parish, Jaipur on 3rd December
1979-84

Established the Catholic Social Service Society in Jaipur in 1981
for rural development work

Built 375 low cost houses for the poor, and founded a primary
school in Mukundpura village, Jaipur Dt.

Principal of St. Michael's Sr. Sec. School, Patna: 1984-92.

Founder, First Principal & Secretary of St. Xavier's College of
Education, Patna in 1988-90 Patna Province

Coordinator for Education from 1985-90

Founded the Patna Catholic School Principals' Association in 1986

Built 2 buildings in 1989-90: one for St. Xavier's College of Education and the other for St. Michael's

Principal of St. Joseph's High School, Baramulla, Kashmir, in 1992

Pastor of St. Joseph's Parish, Baramulla.

Principal & Rector of St. Xavier's Sr. Sec. School, Jaipur from 1994-97

Pastor of St. Xavier's Parish, Jaipur from 1994-97.

Delhi Jesuit Region Coordinator for Education from 1995-2001.

Principal of St. Xavier's Sr. Sec. School, Delhi: 1997-2001.

Built the Millennium Complex of St. Xavier's Delhi in 1999-2001

Established and set up two state-of-the-art English Language Labs and two equally excellent Computer Labs, a Multi-media Lab, and a Creativity Room.

Principal of St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu from 2001-2007.

Member of Academic Council, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu from 2004-2007.

Built Fr. E.L. Wartin Memorial Building in 2004-2005

Coordinator of Education of Nepal Jesuit Region from 2002-2007.

Established new degree courses in the College: B.B.S. and B.Sc. in 2002: BIM in 2003 and MSW in 2006.

Setup three computer labs with a total of 185 latest computers with unlimited internet facility

Built up many other infrastructural facilities for the College

Developed the finances of the college for further expansions and constructions

Initiated the process of establishing B.Sc and M.Sc in Microbiology

Chairman of Higher Education Commission, Delhi Jesuit Province in 2007

Played a leading role in establishing St. Xavier's College, Jaipur in 2010

Built Navjivan Renewal Centre on St. Xavier's Campus, Delhi, 2010-2013

Modernized and Renovated the infrastructural and technical facilities in St. Xavier's, 4 Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi, from 2009 to 2014

Rector of St. Xavier's Sr. Sec. School, 4 Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi since 4th July 2009.

Moderator of DOXA and Coordinator, Alumni Association of Delhi Province since 4th July 2009.



Epilogue

*The true perfection of man lies
not in what man has, but in what man is.
~ Oscar Wilde*

It is always the author's prerogative to write the epilogue for his book. But I have decided to do the honour for him because I know that he will never say 'No' to it. From the last 18 years of my association with Fr. Augustine I have known him to be a leader who never discourages any initiative taken by any one of his subordinates. Accommodative and receptive, Father readily takes in other's points of view, carefully assessing, analyzing and never disregarding any opinion that is put before him.

When he took charge as our Principal in July 1997, for me he appeared to be a boss who preferred to keep a dignified professional distance from the staff he commanded. I being a very young teacher and new to Xavier's, always kept myself away from him. But I was surprised to find my two young daughters studying in classes 3rd and 5th at that time spending long hours with Father joking and playing. They appeared to have forgotten the fact that he was the Principal of their school; instead they enormously enjoyed his company and talked to him even more freely than they did with me. It was then I began to understand Father

better. During our conversations he always spoke about excellence, perfection and doing everything for the greater glory of God. There is no room for mediocrity with Father. He is a perfectionist to the core and has the ability of bringing out the best in others. In all his actions these qualities were very well reflected. As a true leader he always expected his staff to do their duty and a little more. He would always say that the success of any institution depended on this “a little more...” works performed by the staff.

Father's manner of dealing with his staff is truly exemplary – he possesses a rare combination of genuine concern and a necessary reserve. The Staff who have worked with Father will vouch for the warmth and care his personality exudes. Magnanimity is a quality that forms the very essence of Father's character. In fact he is generous to a fault – giving selflessly of his time, talent and expertise.

In one year I was asked to teach History to class 9 for some time as a substitute teacher. One day I got into some trouble in one of the sections. In my frustration I walked into the Principal's office and said: “Father, I don't want teach History anymore!” He appeared to be very calm and composed. He smiled and replied: “Don't teach *History*, but teach the *Students!*”

I was flabbergasted. My anger subsided, my frustration gone and I walked out of his office smiling. For the first time in my life as a teacher I learned what my real mission was. Since then these words literally changed my whole perspective about being a teacher.

In 1997 when he joined Xavier's there was a talk among the senior teachers that if Fr. Augustine was found gazing at a place for long, sure that place was going to transform. It was true. First, our assembly

ground got a makeover. It was widened and beautified with gardens surrounding it. A dumping place at one side of the assembly ground became a Rock Garden and on the other we had a Palm Garden with fish-tail palm trees. Ashok trees were planted on the campus. This trend of change and modification continued and finally it culminated in the construction of the Millennium Complex in 2001. In the grueling process of its construction we always saw him lost in thought, dreaming, planning and of course struggling hard to fulfill his dream. It was a dream that we all shared. For some time we found him missing from action as the Principal. But we walked along with him dreaming the same dream and helping him fulfilling it. Before he bid farewell to Xavier's, Delhi in 2001 he quoted W.B. Yeats: "I have spread my dreams under your feet: tread softly because you tread on my dreams" and whoever treaded on his dreams in the subsequent years got affected enormously by it. Each year hundreds of Xaverians groom themselves in this magnificent millennium complex, gain confidence and walk out of Xavier's with courage to face the world and change it.

Fr. Augustine has a vision for any institution God has sent him to. His zeal to concretize it is truly contagious – people around him can't help but be drawn into his vision and obstacles either melt away or turn into stepping stones to actualize his dreams. He always recognized and acknowledged that the human resource is the greatest resource of any institution and so gave the utmost importance to the enhancement of the competence of the Staff.

The book 'My Footprints on the Sands of Time' is a memoir of Fr. P.T. Augustine's contributions in the field of education. In this book he recounts his long journey through the various Jesuit educational

institutions and reveals before us the Midas touch he gave to them. A creative and innovative educationist in North India and Nepal, Fr. Augustine has left an indelible imprint on the hearts and lives of generations of young students and their parents, his staff and collaborators. As Fr. Augustine celebrates the 75th year of his life I wish him long innings with more inspiring dreams. Thus ends the short epilogue of this long story.

**K.J. Devasia, Coordinator, Sr. School
St. Xavier's School, Delhi - 54**



